

the greatest university in America—I have, in season and out of season, advised the young men under my charge that they might with clear conscience and impunity disobey the law, if they so desired, on the ground that it cannot be enforced.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. Seward, Garrison, and John Brown invoked the "Higher Law" to prevent the return of human beings into slavery, and I appeal from Roosevelt and Lincoln to those apostles of liberty.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. And Lincoln said the best way to get rid of an obnoxious law was to enforce it.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. But political methods have changed since then, and I and those who have collaborated with me have followed the more modern policy of encouraging violation of law until such violations have become so general that we may now assert with perfect confidence that the law cannot be enforced, and hence the law should be repealed.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. I am pleased to observe that you have followed my logic to this point, and it necessarily follows that the great Republican Party, which was born in a struggle for human rights, must, if it hopes to succeed in 1928, eliminate all minor questions, such as law enforcement and law observance, and strike at the root of the whole matter. It is obvious that if we repeal the law which is violated there will no longer be any violations of such law. To get rid of lawlessness all we have to do is to get rid of the law. There we have a fundamental principle in a nutshell, universal in its application. No one can dispute

it. In the language of the plain, uneducated people, "It's a cinch." After diligent research, I am surprised that no other great student of American institutions should have discovered that elemental fact.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. It being settled, then, that you will not be a candidate for re-nomination, and that the Republican Party must go before the people in 1928 advocating the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment to the exclusion of all minor issues, let us discuss the logical candidates—if there be more than one—although perhaps the answer to that question is involved in what you have already so frankly stated.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. The candidate of our party must have the electoral vote of New York State to be elected.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. No candidate of our party can get the electoral vote of New York State if the Democratic vote in New York City is large enough to overcome the Republican majority up State. You may not be able to follow me in that, but it is very clear to me—logic is logic, and you can't get away from it.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. Some candidate, therefore—I do not say who—must be nominated by the Republican Party who can command the support of that very large heterogeneous mass of men and women below the Bronx who would like to be law-abiding citizens and who would willingly be law-abiding citizens but for the existence of laws which make their acts unlawful.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. I know these people, or at least that portion of them who reside in

the vicinity of Morningside Heights. I know their troubles, their hungerings and their thirstings. Their mute appeal for some Moses to spy out the land and lead them to the oases and to the refreshing streams touches my heart. In 1920 I reluctantly permitted my name to go before the Republican National Convention as a candidate for President. I received more than half of the votes of my own State (on the first ballot) and several votes from other States, but the Convention was hypnotized by Mr. Harding and his friends. It was a "brain storm," as I have often confessed, that led me to permit my name to come before that Convention in face of the grip which you and Mr. Harding had on the delegates; but Mr. Harding is dead, and you are also—out of it. I feel the premonitions of another "brain storm." I feel it my duty, with your permission, to release for publication what you have so frankly told me in this interview and leave the issue with my long-suffering countrymen.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. I was afraid, Mr. Coolidge, that your mind would fail to grasp the logic of the situation, but you have shown a clearness of vision and keenness of discernment far beyond my expectations.

Mr. Coolidge. Yes?

Dr. Butler. And if I can be of any assistance to you in solving the problems which must weigh heavily on your mind during the remainder of your term of office, I want to assure you that Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, LL.D., President of Columbia University, will always be at your command. Good-day, Mr. Coolidge.

Mr. Coolidge. Good-day, Mr. President.

"The King's Henchman"

An American Opera which May Mark a New Departure

By CHARLES HENRY MELTZER

THE first performance at the Metropolitan last week of a lyric drama in three acts entitled "The King's Henchman" was one more belated step towards the full and inevitable acknowledgment of the artistic birthright of Americans. The "book" was by a poet justly popular in her own field, Edna St. Vincent Millay. Deems Taylor, known both as a critic and a composer of light concert suites, had made the score. Somewhat frugal but sufficient scenes and costumes had been provided by Mr. Gatti-Casazza; Maes-

tro Serafin had charge of the proceedings; while the cast, including several expert singers, was largely American.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the production aroused widespread interest. It was hoped by some, and deeply feared by others, that it would mark a turning-point in the long, dogged, grinding fight for opera in English and American art. I incline to think it did prove just that turning-point, though it may not have given the world another masterpiece.

More important in some ways than

even the music, in this case, was the libretto.

As musicians know, librettos are the foundations of all operas. If they are good, the composers have a chance. If they are bad, it takes a genius to succeed with them.

Some years ago I asked Cleofonte Campanini what he thought of a new opera to be performed under his direction. "I can't say," he answered. "I have not yet read the libretto."

Opera after opera, by this or that American, has failed here, largely if not

wholly, owing to the wrongness, the unfitness, of a libretto. One was ill constructed, another was ill worded or unsingable. The "Natoma" words were singable, but infantile. Those of "Mo-



(C) Mishkin

Deems Taylor

na," "The Pipe of Desire," "Rip Van Winkle," and more, although "scholarly" and fairly readable, were the inventions of bookmen or unmusical dramatists, incapable of realizing that "books" designed for composers of our day should be written, not for the eye and brain alone, but also for the heart and, above all, the ear.

Because Mr. Taylor and his associate have neglected such truisms, "The King's Henchman," despite many charming qualities, does not satisfy one.

The most serious fault of the libretto is that only half of it is English. Hypnotized by the fact that her plot dealt with the England before the Conquest, Miss Millay has written much of it in what, by courtesy, I will call Anglo-Saxon. Her book is the tortured work of a gifted woman seemingly unmusical. To nine-tenths of those who hear this at the Metropolitan all that is Anglo-Saxon will be as meaningless as Italian, and less pleasing. Not till the second act does Miss Millay give us the clear sounds and sense which we require in operas. There, now and then, she drops her high school pedantry and breaks into brave Tudor and Victorian speech. She may do better if she has another fling. Let no believer in our own tongue be dismayed by the sneers or jeers of

those who will tell you that English, pure English, is not singable.

To supply background, "atmosphere," and local color Miss Millay has littered up her libretto with irrelevancies. She has forgotten, in her first act, the great need of action. Worst of all, as I have hinted, she has befogged her tale by resorting to dead, uncouth archaisms. A word or two at intervals would have sufficed to suggest a period.

Why should singers be distressed by words like these: "Nuzzling i' the mash-vat," "Now hath his Lady a bitter burthen to thole" (for a burden to bear), and "My throstle-throat"?

The texts of "Carmen," "Faust," "Aïda," "Manon," and "Lohengrin," evoking the most different periods, are written in intelligible idioms. Even the "Ring" (dealing with myths) does not annoy one overmuch with mere "quaintnesses." "The King's Henchman," on the other hand, clamors for a glossary. One should not need a glossary in opera.

Here is a passage from the love scene in the second act, which fits opera admirably. It is in English, not in clumsy Anglo-Saxon, and begins with—

Ah, could we hide us here in a cleft of
the night,

And never be found!

Lost, lost,
Forgotten and lost,
Out of sight, out of sound!

Letting the sun ride by, with his
golden helmet—

It recalls the second act of "Tristan" as to its purport, but it is more poetic.

In my opinion, it was a mistake for the co-authors of "The King's Henchman" to brave crushing and legitimate comparisons with what is, by and large, a feeble effort to create a parallel for "Tristan and Yseult" and "Paolo and Francesca." "Strain not your talent," said the wise Frenchman.

It was a mistake to confuse and delay the unfolding of the plot (in the fourth column of the printed text) by chatter in a dead and buried tongue.

Writing for the eye and brain, Miss Millay has wrought out a rambling story which, except in the second act, is badly constructed. It tells us, in "quaint" phrases of the past, how Aethelwold, the henchman of King Eadgar, was sent (like another Tristan) into Devonshire to pave the way for his lord's marriage with the fair Aelfrida, and how, being caught in a misty wood at Hallowe'en, he met that lady, was wooed by her, like Bottom by Titania, and betrayed his trust. When he had married his Aelfrida, she grew tired of him, and resented losing Eadgar, whom at the outset she had hated. The King came

riding by and learned the truth. So there was nothing left for Aethelwold but to kill himself. He died unregretted by his fickle spouse. A poor heroine. And a limp hero. Yseult (or Isolde)



Wide World

Edna St. Vincent Millay

without rapture. Tristan without steadfastness.

But the music?

To the delight of all Americans who heard it, Mr. Taylor's score is, on the whole, a fine achievement. Technically, it would do honor to most composers of our time. It is frankly orthodox, not for one instant "modernist," flowing and untrammelled, like the second act of Montemezzi's "Love of the Three Kings," vigorous and yet melodic, in the main admirably orchestrated, and abounding in contrasts. Having gone so far in praise, I must now add that only seldom, save in the composer's playful and less strenuous moods, is it original.

Mr. Taylor has borrowed most of his materials from the master Wagner; among them his palette, style, and method, though he has not worried much about Wagnerian *leit-motifs*, or characteristic themes used for the suggestion of characters. Wagner, to be sure, borrowed also, from Weber and Berlioz.

It was disturbing in the third act to be reminded of the shepherd's (or herdsman's) horn in "Tristan," and at another point in the same act to hear more than a vague hint of the "Fire Music" and "Wotan's Farewell" in "The Valkyrie." Nor in his bewitching love scene in the misty wood could the com-

poser get away from the inspired ecstasies of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. It is a pity, too, that the rhapsodic high point of his opera is scored so heavily that we lose more than half the charming and vital words. For this the conductor should be partly blamed. The duet in question, the Song of Maccus, at the opening of the opera, the amusing (though superfluous) excursion into Roman history, with the refrain of "For I'd liefer be quick than dead!" tossed from one to another character, and the blessing of Aethelwold by the Bishop at the end of the first act stand out agreeably in my memory. The orchestra really sings throughout the opera as Wagner's does—more nobly—in "The Master-Singers."

Mr. Taylor should be commended for so cleverly slowing his *tempi* where many of the librettist's archaisms are forced on us, and especially in the Song of Maccus, the Kurvenal of the tale, of which every word was thus made audible.

Of the interpreters, Mr. Edward Johnson (the Aethelwold) most distinguished himself by the clearness with which he articulated even such heart-breaking words as "throstle throat" and by the slightly conventional fervor of his acting. To Mr. Gustafson (the Maccus) and Mr. Meader (the Dunstan) thanks are due for their excellent enunciation in important episodes which put English to the test. Though not striking or impressive as to externals, the King

Eadgar of Mr. Tibbett did him credit. Miss Florence Eastman was miscast as the fickle heroine. She sang tunefully; but—to be honest—she lacked charm and fantasy. Maestro Serafin, while at moments warm and eloquent, was so anxious to display the resources of his orchestra that he forgot the equal claims of the librettist and the singers.

"Deep and shoal" (to quote Miss Millay), "The King's Henchman" is beyond question an achievement. But if Mr. Taylor is sensible and judicious, in his next opera he will turn his mind at something lighter and more graceful than "grand" opera. A lyric operacomique, an American expression of the French *genre*, should suit his unusual talent vastly better.

Let's Not Think¹

By an Undergraduate

I AM a student in a State University, where the flower of the youthhood of the State is being trained for useful and courageous citizenship, according to a grandfatherly, dear old soft-soapy speaker at Convocation. Yes, he told us that what America needs, and this whole mixed-up world needs, are men and women who can think straight. And it was very nice of him to say so, and quite proper. Some of the seniors on the front rows looked politely interested; after four years of college they had become good actors. The rest of us read "Snappy Stories" or some other good magazine, or else took a respectable quiet nap. Then afterwards we all stood up while the President and the speaker left the gym, feeling virtuous and smug the way everybody does who has been exposed to goodness for an hour at church on Sunday morning.

It was at a college social function, which is really just an ordinary dance, that the idea of this article came to me. I had taken one of the nicest co-eds on the campus, one of the few girls who have both good looks and brains. The gym was decorated with fraternity and sorority banners, and, half thinking out loud, I said to the girl, "What do you think of frats, anyway?"

"Oh, let's not think to-night," she said. "Let's just enjoy ourselves." Which was perfectly all right, because, I suppose, there is as much danger of overworking your brain as your muscles.

The next dance I swapped girls with a frat brother, and, not knowing the girl very well, I endeavored to make conversation. So, according to the "Rules of Etiquette for Every Occasion," I took a subject in which I presumed we both had a common interest.

"What do you think of fraternities?" I asked.

"Darned if I know," she said. "I don't believe in thinking."

Well, this was the second girl who didn't want to think. Being a major student in sociology—which is the science of human nature, because the Dean and the text-book both say so—I asked every girl that I danced with that night what she thought about something, and two out of nine were willing to think, and one of the two was the girl I dragged. Of course, I don't know whether girls are supposed to think or not, as all through the ages, according to H. G. Wells, women have been protected and haven't had to face hard problems. Which may be true or not—mostly not, to my way of thinking.

JUST for the fun, I asked some fraternity brothers a few questions. "Si, what do you think would happen if political parties should be broken up, and each one voted independently for the candidate whom he thought best fitted for the office?"

"Gosh, what's the use of thinking? We've got political parties, and we'll always have them." The opposite of what the wise guys used to say about Darius Green and his flying-machine.

"Brownie," I asked, "do you think

this author is right when he says that human nature is, always will be, and always has been the same?"

"Darn it, there's no use thinking about it. The book says so, and that makes it so. What's he writing a book for if he doesn't know what he's talking about?"

Which is a very pertinent question to ask in this wonderful day and age. I wonder why they do. Especially these psychologists and sociologists and psychists and psychoanalysts, and all the other ists, who know how to use such big words. "Philosophically speaking, from a sociological standpoint, we must enumerate and elucidate," et cetera. Does a large vocabulary mean deep thinking?

I even asked a member of the faculty one day, "Do you think a final exam is any criterion of the amount of knowledge a pupil obtains from a course?"

"There's no use thinking about it," he replied. "Final exams we always have had, and probably always will."

MAYBE I'm queer, but what is the sense of trying to get a "higher education"? Higher than what, by the way? Aren't you supposed to use your brains, or isn't it the proper thing to do? Like the lad or lass asking legitimate questions about life and being put off by saying that nice people don't talk about such things.

It's almost funny, unless you are cursed with a serious mind and recognize the tragedy of it, to see how hard a student will work to avoid thinking.

¹ See editorial comment.—THE EDITORS.