

The Crooners

(With apologies to E. A. Poe).

HEAR the crooner as he croons
O'er the air;
What a tale of love's unfaithfulness his
tearful tones declare;
How he whines, and wails and bleats,
Early morn till late at night;
How his harrowed heart entreats
Some fair maid for whom it beats,
That she will his love requite;
(As lone puppies bay to unresponsive
moons).
But, no matter how he whimpers,
She, the hussy, merely simpers
In disdain
Of his paip,
For it seems she's just as false as she
is fair.
So he croons, croons, croons,
Sickly words and slushy tunes,
In a lachrymose effusion that his sense
and worth impugns,
Vitiating all the unoffending air.

HEAR the crooner's counterpart
(Bless her heart!),
As she sings "Somebody loves me, who,
I wonder, can it be?"
In the voice of childhood's prattle,
Fit for just such tiresome tattle,
And we wonder too, and sadly, Who
is he?
For his nerves she'd surely rattle,
And he has our sympathy.
And she coos,
And she mews;
And although in lovely woman there's a
lot we must excuse
We grow weary of her sad soliloquy.

OH, these crooners, how they croon,
Man and maid!
With what crude and mawkish sentiment
our quiet they invade.
How they drivel, how they drone,
How they snivel, how they moan,
Sans surcease.
But a day comes, late or soon,
When we'll pass—Oh priceless boon—
On "to where beyond these voices there
is peace."

—Ronald Buchanan.

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"Great Artists of the World" series) seemed to me to have been perfectly chosen for the purpose. Its owner spoke with diffidence, and not the least sign of presumption, which is probably what My Lady demands. And she employed a tone that allowed no emphasis to fall at any point which was just as well, since there was no single point of interest in the material she had to read that merited emphasis, and stress on any phrase would have been misplaced. Nevertheless she had the virtue of being able to seem impressed by the trivialities on the page in front of her, and had a remarkable ability for reeling off the kind of details of which most of these talks consist, such as opera houses burning down, artists turning down valuable contracts, and the extremely non-committal remarks of unnamed "famous critics," as if there really were some usefulness in all this information.

The Master's Voice

STATION 3YA played a recording of an Edgar Wallace short story, recounted by the great man himself. The story, which was about the sister of two condemned thugs who tried to murder the hangman, as he went to work on the King's Highway, had all Wallace's dramatic gifts and lordly disregard of all the probabilities; but one really listened to

the voice. Wallace was not really a good or skilled reader; he halted and failed to change tone; but his extraordinary personality gave the whole life. Those self-educated uncertain accents were the great successful careerist he was, and that jerky violence was genuinely the man who wrote a novel in five days and lived like that for 15 years; certainly a personal triumph, if not a literary one.

Great Wits and Madness

THE famous "Mad Scene" is not a monopoly of operatic composers; in how many poems, stories, and plays is there a fair creature with straws in her hair? Modern writers are also eager to depict the shadowy borderlands of the mind, but in a clinical, detached, psycho-analytical manner which leaves the reader somewhat chilled. The lunatics of the older school of writers were more interesting, painted in more humane colours, and invested with a romantic aura not encouraged nowadays. There was one delightful thing about all of them—they could all sing! From Ophelia to Lucia, from Tom o' Bedlam to Mad Meg in *Ruddigore*, they all invent snatches of delightful nonsense and chant them in a manner which no insane person could for a moment manage, such is the voice-control, musical knowledge, and general stability of intellect required for even the most minor of these roles. But surely for vocal diversity there is no single air to touch Purcell's "Mad Bess." Listening to this song recently from 4YA, I wondered how the poor demented soul could manage so successfully the key-changes, alterations of rhythm and tempo, and subtle differences of mood and manner required in its lengthy phrases. If she has the mental stamina to sing this so well, she had better forsake her straw and apply forthwith for an audition to the nearest operatic manager.

... And Fain Would Lie Doon

IT is perhaps a question whether Scottish ballads like "Lord Randall" and "Edward" should be done to music at all; but being so, it seems an error to strive to put more force into them than they already possess, especially when this is done by means of skirling and groans, as in the last verse of "Widdicombe Fair"—itself an excellent example of this style of singing carried to the point of burlesque. Some eminent singers are guilty of this—John Charles Thomas ("Lord Randall") and Lawrence Tibbett ("Edward")—but surely these ballads are obvious cases of the explosive force of mere statement and don't need reinforcement by quite so much horrific-pause-and-bellow-of-agony stuff? And some of the most hair-raising verses are actually omitted from the recorded version of "Lord Randall"; the cheerful explanations that the eels at dinner were "speckled and blotched," and that his hounds having tasted "they swelled and they died, mother." If its horror you're after, these have it.



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