

"Interlude"

(Continued from page 3.)

God, we have the sense to grasp our happiness instead of doing the usual thing and—(scornfully)—"sacrificing our love rather than our honour," and all



Listeners will be interested to learn that, under the auspices of the Society of Professional Musicians of Otago, Signora Martinelli-Reggiardo will present, on Wednesday, September 16, a novel and delightful lecture-recital from 4YA. This programme will be entitled: "Italy. Land of Song," and music lovers are assured of an interesting entertainment. In collaboration with Signor Giovanni-Stella—a distinguished exponent of the Italian vocal style—Signora Martinelli-Reggiardo has explored the rich field of popular melodies with which Italy abounds, and has arranged a programme of story and song which will transport listeners to that land of music and romance.

the other eyewash that cloaks a coward's heroics!

Mrs. C.: You are talking like an adolescent schoolgirl, Zetta—the same cant and blatant creed of freedom and self-expression which is simply another word for selfishness. [Rises, puts glass on table, and walks up and down in front of windows.] "You love Peter too much to give him up! Bah! You make me sick! You mean you love yourself too much to forgo this little drama of which you have made yourself the poor misjudged long-suffering heroine. [As Mrs. B. starts to interrupt angrily.] Oh, I know how nice it feels to be the wronged woman condemned by all but her lover, hugging to herself the smug satisfaction of her own righteousness and breadth of vision—makes you feel infinitely superior to their snubs and mud-slinging, doesn't it? Well, listen to me. If you go away with Peter you are not going wrapped in the comfortable glow of your own opinion of yourself; you're going to take away with you somebody else's picture of you, and it's not one you'll like, either. You love Peter! You have no conception of the first thing

about love. Not once have you given Peter a thought in your sweeping statements—"My love!" "Our love!" Have you ever heard of a word called sacrifice? What sort of a companion and lover do you think you'll make for Peter twenty years hence when he's in his prime and you are an old woman? Oh, but that doesn't matter, does it?—(very sarcastically)—"Live for to-day," or "Our love will tide us over that." (Ceases walking up and down.) Well, it won't, and if you think I'm going to sit down and watch my boy's happiness stolen from him by a woman who can't and won't see what a crime she is committing, you're a bigger fool than I thought you were!

Mrs. B.: That's enough, Mary! You are wasting your breath. If you think all that you have said is a revelation to me, you are making a big mistake. I am not a fool! Do you suppose I haven't thought and thought till my head ached? I knew when I made up my mind to go ahead with this that people would say and think as you are saying. But I must confess I had hoped you would rise above such platitudes. Your fears for Peter are only natural, but they are entirely unnecessary. Our love is based upon the soundest and most ideal conception of love. We have everything in common—a love of art, music and nature, and our opinions on vital subjects do not clash; therefore our companionship is assured. Peter's love is of the romantic kind, and is less likely to be bruised by me than by some blundering girl of his own age. He is sensitive, and needs someone on whom he can lean. My love for him is largely material. It will protect and cherish him where a younger love would possibly destroy so much that is rare and delicate in his nature. You speak of love as if it can only be manifested by suicide on its own altar. I believe that love and sacrifice can work together. If your conception of love is the immediate renunciation of itself if it just happened to place you in an awkward predicament, then you have never known love! Your fanatical raving is simply the outpouring of a jealousy which seeks to deprive me of that which you have never known, that is the love of a friend, a lover, and a son, in the love of one man.

Mrs. C. (walking away from window and approaching Mrs. B. centre stage—her voice quivers with anger, but both women are striving hard to keep control of themselves): You blind fool! What right have you to delude yourself into believing that you are the only woman

who has been faced with a similar situation, just because we do not all adopt the same melodramatic solution as you? You force me to tell you things, which for your sake I never meant to say. For Peter's sake I must do all I can, even to laying bare such memories as you will scoff at. Five years before you came to India, when I had been married eight years, I met a man who meant everything to me—all that you claim Peter means to you. I was only 25 then. I had married when I was only 17 and had never known more than affection and gratitude toward my husband. This new power, which we both fought at first, swept me right off my feet, and I hovered, blinded by the glory of such happiness as I had never known existed. If we had so chosen, we could have done as you propose doing to-day. We could have taken our happiness—counted the world well lost—we were self-sufficient to each other. Together we could have sought and conquered new worlds—and the price would have been paid by others suffering—not ours—a career ruined. What did that mean then? My husband's life broken, my babies left motherless, brothers, sisters, parents, friends—the circle of those who would have suffered for us was never ending. But don't you think I could have shut my eyes to all that just as you are doing? And I at least was giving my man the youth he had the right to expect. But something—how, or why I stopped God knows. I was no saint; in fact, many would condemn my action and praise yours. Something made me realise what it would all mean. (Softly): It seemed to me like throwing a stone into a still pool of water—the circles spread out wider and wider till that one small splash disturbs the whole pool. So it seemed to me that we could not mould our lives as we wished without affecting the lives of so many others, and so—(pauses, then slowing, as though relinquishing a sad memory)—I let him go.

Mrs. B. (sitting down in wicker chair again and crossing her legs, with condensation): A very sad little incident, Mary! I never imagined you had this little life tragedy up your sleeve. What a pity you don't write a book about it. Think of the moral it would point out for those hovering on the brink of the same mistake. "And Mary went back to her husband and they lived happily ever after"! Have you lived happily ever after, Mary? But, of course, how silly of me—sacrifice not happiness is our goal! (Laughing forcedly): Oh no, my dear, You cannot put me off by appealing to my sentiment. Frankly, I consider you acted like a weak fool. It is not my idea of courage to shirk the issues and return to your husband with nothing but a washed-out memory and thoughts of what might have been. But we are wasting time.

Mrs. C.: You are quite right. I see only too well I have wasted time by appealing to you. Very well, you shall hear

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