

## BLACKFRIARS

### THE PLAY

Miss Helen Jerome is a brave woman. In dramatizing *Pride and Prejudice* for performance at the ST. JAMES THEATRE, she had to reckon not only with those who, believing that a work of art born in one medium cannot indifferently be translated into another, usually look askance at a dramatized novel, but with those whose intimacy with "Jane" leads them to feel towards her as children feel towards familiar favourite tales, ready to revolt at the smallest variation or infidelity. Yet so deftly and discreetly has Miss Jerome done her work, so penetrated is she by the spirit of her author, that the play is a delight.

Much of course had to be sacrificed. In the speeding up and condensation of action the subtlety of psychological process is lost. When the Bennets have hardly heard of the new tenancy of Netherby Hall than Bingley and Darcy actually pay a visit, and the two gentlemen are barely out of the house before Mr. Collins' arrival is announced, we wonder how Mrs. Bennett's nerves survived such a succession of momentous happenings, and if Longbourn presented such breathless social life, what more could Brighton offer to gadabout Lydia? One must agree too with another critic that never would Lady Catherine de Bourgh have invited Elizabeth to *stay*. But these are minor matters; in essentials and atmosphere the rendering is as truthful as it could well be. The ear is continually charmed by language at once so pure and so to the point, and the acting of the whole caste has an admirable finish. I shall never re-read *Pride and Prejudice* without seeing delicious Celia Johnson as delicious Elizabeth.

In the triumphant run of *Romeo and Juliet* at the New THEATRE, which has just ended, as in his *Hamlet* Mr. Gielgud gave a sincere, straightforward, balanced and delicately phrased performance, in which the mysterious underlying motifs became discernible, like overtones of music. Miss Peggy Ashcroft was a perfect Juliet, and to me the high light of the whole play was the moment when she realized that even the Nurse had abandoned her, and that those two children must work out their destiny alone—save of course for that all too well-meaning child of larger growth, the Friar. Here is a theme constant in so much of Shakespeare's work—not the threat to the old from the younger generation knocking at the door, but the very reverse, the strangling of what is young and new by the old. Cordelia dies through Lear's folly; in *Hamlet* and *Romeo* we see those that should have stood for regeneration and new life caught in the toils and so becoming themselves instruments of destruction. It is tempting to see in this theme an unconscious parable of the story of Shakespeare's time, and not of his time only; such indeed was the tragedy of the Renaissance, the blighted blossom. Thus

## NOTICES

read, *Romeo and Juliet*, among the first of Shakespeare's plays, finds its pendant in *The Tempest*, the last, when youth goes forward to a "brave new world," but it is a world lit by an apocalyptic light, hardly of this earth.

Of Ibsen, and the excellent presentation of him at the CRITERION THEATRE, Piccadilly, I hope to speak next month.

BARBARA BARCLAY CARTER.

## GRAMOPHONE

Somebody has recently called Handel the G.O.M. of English music. Of course, *omnis comparatio claudicat*; but even so, this is surely going a bit far. Handel's dignity is not often pompous or ponderous; his most massive rectitude certainly does not suggest a Victorian Sunday afternoon; he can be as debonair as Dizzy. *Samson* is one of his great overtures, too seldom heard: it begins in quite un-Gladstonian majesty, and continues in the grace and vivacity of a Brandenburg *allegro*. Decca add to their list of successes by issuing a recording of this by Sir Henry Wood (K 812). Mozart, thank heaven, is hardly likely to be compared to Mr. Gladstone, though on the other hand he is sometimes spoken of as if a dainty elegance were his best attribute, as though he were capable of no better than pirouetting round the ballroom in high-heeled shoes and a periwig. He can at times be carefree; the *Serenata Notturmo*, if not in his greatest vein, is a lovely example of his combination of daintiness and strength; the Boyd Neel again give a beautiful rendering (K 813-4). Arthur Bliss should make the Wells film *Things to Come* worth while if the film itself is not; the incidental *Ballet for Children* and "melodramatic" music are excellent, and worth possessing for their own sake (K 810-11). Prokofieff in *Sarcasme no. 5* is naughty but nice; the Glazounow *Concert Etude in G major* on the other side is a concert *étude*; the capable pianist who plays both is Borowsky (DE 7053). Milhaud's Quartet no. 7 (*Allegro, Andante, Lento, Vivace*), played by the Galimir with great delicacy, is charming, and grows more so with better acquaintance; the *lento* particularly lovely (DE 7054-5).

Of first rank among the H.M.V. recordings is the Franck Sonata for Violin and Piano, played by Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin. Their treatment is sympathetic; if the piano compares at times unfavourably with Blanche Selva's playing in the older Columbia version, it is at any rate a great improvement on the recent rendering of the Kreutzer; the fiddle is excellent, the recording flawless (DB 2742-5). The Czech Philharmonic, who made so fine a recording of Dvorak's 4th Symphony last month, now play his Slavonic Dances, nos. 1 and 2 with equal vivacity (C 2825).