done to further improve it, the position of the masses is better
than it once was, and the difference between classes is nothing
like so great as formerly. The present generation of middle-
class parents of young children are the people who have diffi-
culties with which to contend. In spite of Board of Trade
Returns and other statistics, it is the middle-class which has been
the least prosperous of recent years. The income of the average
middle-class man has been less of recent years than it was before.
This state of affairs would continue under Free Trade. It is not
the working class which has suffered, because it has protected itself
by organisation. The average middle-class man has not been
able to "afford" to have more than one or two children. The
nations which succeed in increasing their birth-rate will be the
nations to prosper after the war. . . . If we do not materially
increase our birth-rate we shall be seriously handicapped.
Proposals are now being made to reform our divorce and marriage
laws, but they will take a little time to develop. I submit that
the first step to be taken is for an Act to be passed giving the
right to forthwith re-marry to all persons who have been "separ-
ated," in any way, by divorce or orders. Will those in favour of
that course be immediately adopted do one of the following things:
(1) Send me a postcard supporting that proposal; or (2)
send such a postcard to Mrs. Seaton-Tiedeman, Secretary, The
Divorce Law Reform Union, 10, Buckingham Street, Strand,
W.C.; or (3) send such a postcard to their local M.P.s, whether
or not they are Liberals?
This point has surely been discussed enough to be dealt with
at once. This is neither a political nor a religious question—it is
a national question of great importance to be dealt with without
further delay in order to begin to increase the birth-rate.
To avoid any possible misunderstanding I do not want any
money sent to me, I only want communications. If anyone desires to assist financially, contributions will be gratefully
acknowledged by Mrs. Seaton-Tiedeman, and any money
so contributed will be usefully employed. Even small donations
will be welcome for her Literature Fund.—Yours, etc.
A. E. BALE.
45, Sudbourne Road, Brixton Hill, S.W.
August 5th.

WAR PENSIIONS

To the Editor of The New Statesman.

Sir,—The case, in your admirable article on War Pensions,
against "the chaos of overlapping and duplicate authorities"
is quite unanswerable, but I confess I find your new Minister
for Pensions rather unspeakable. The Statutory Committee
must, by all means, be merged, but surely, as far as Army
pensions are concerned, in no one better than the Secretary of State
for War.

In the first place, your tale of War Office mismanagement does not
convince me. The War Office must interpret the regulations
laid down by Parliament, and cannot be blamed if the regulations
read otherwise than the soldier intended. The crassest
"intellectual" theory, which has many "intellectuals" in expect-
ing, presumably, it cannot well continue a soldier's pay and
allowances until pension is granted, because pension is not
always granted. And certainly, from what is said to and by Mr.
Forster in the House of Commons, the Chelsea Hospital Commis-
sioners are not "reluctant to admit that any man is totally dis-
abled." They always gave the soldier the benefit of the doubt,
and reconsider his case if he appeals. "Reluctance" is not of
the spirit.

More convincing, in the second place, are the reasons why the
Secretary of State for War should embrace the Statutory Commit-
tee. Provided the rates of pension leave nothing for desire,
few soldiers for associations' sake would not prefer the Army
to pension them. It stimulates their esprit de corps. Nor, from
the administrative point of view, does it make for economy if the
War Office is to know that how many soever soldiers it has, and
whatsoever it does with them, it will not have to give them
pensions. For one department to spend, and for another to pay,
is the first kind of administrative folly.

For once, I would defend the rights of the Secretary of State for
War. Few people would weep over the grave of the Statutory
Committee. But not a few would weep to see the scarlet of
the Chelsea Pensioners changed to policeman's blue.—I am, yours,
etc.
E. H. DAVENPORT.
The Temple, August 8th.

THE CONVERSION OF SUDERMANN

THERE seem to be a good many people in Germany
who, unable to find any satisfactory justification for
the war, are content to fall back on the comforting
belief that, in some way, it has ennobled the national soul.
This optimistic view, whose chief supporters, it has been
noted, are literary gentlemen over military age, has now
won the adherence of Herr Hermann Sudermann. It
forms the leading motive of his latest volume of plays.*

Several years before the outbreak of war Sudermann had
been summed up by the critics and pigeon-holed as a
dramatist having a good stage-technique but no great
intellectual or imaginative power or original genius. His
plots were always well-knit, his "curtains" perfectly
correct; but there was no vitality in his creations; they
were merely stage-automata. "The Sardou of German
drama" was the hackneyed phrase which concluded almost
every criticism. And yet he had managed to acquire an
"intellectual" reputation in Germany, and still more in
this country.

When Sudermann, on the advice of his friends, turned
from writing novels to writing plays, and produced his first
drama, Die Ehre—an attack on duelling—he was greeted as the
forerunner in a new era of the drama. The German

* Die Entgürtete Welt: Szeneische Bilder aus kranker Zeit. Von
Herrn Sudermann. J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger,
Stuttgart und Berlin.
Now this may be an altogether wrong view; it may indicate that Sudermann is possessed by a fundamentally feminine and pernicious idea of the war. And, after all, in spite of the welcome changes which terrible events have brought about in individuals, it is a rather disgusting thing to find a talented writer speaking complacently of them: "We were attacked," should be the only excuse for this ghastly business. Nevertheless, putting aside Sudermann's deficient sense of reality in this respect, one cannot help acknowledging that he has produced the most noteworthy dramatic work that has appeared in Germany since August, 1914.

The first play is a four-act drama entitled Die Freundin. And here at once we meet the old Sudermann. Julianne, the false 'friend,' whose intrigues ruin three lives, is the 'emanipated' young lady we knew so well in Die Heimat, with this difference, namely, that Sudermann has now taken sides against her. She is no longer the misunderstood heroine, but a type of Germany's decadence—the decadence which prevailed until a great war came to purge the land. And when Sudermann, with his customary desire for a happy ending, makes the play end in Julianne's discovery, we perceive that the transformation is complete; from being a tilter at convention he has become the firm upholder of social morality. Thus does he usher in the newer, purer age in which Ibsenese heroines are taboo.

There is no such artificiality about the next play, and it is by so much superior to the first. It is the story of a Berlin city councillor's intrigues to get a Volkstheater built with the object of making his son director. The old man's scheme is defeated by the efforts of various people—another councillor, who is jealous because his plot of land has not been selected; and a picture-gallery owner (with a preference for Futurist paintings; note Sudermann's scorn of the modernists!) who wants his mistress to be given a conspicuous place in the management. And the play ends as it should, with meanness and decadence triumphant. One or two minor incidents are not quite convincing; it is difficult, for example, to believe that so drastic a means as a world-war was needed to do away with the immorality of bare-foot dancing or that, in pre-war Germany, Frenschified conversation always went hand in hand with decadence. Sudermann seems to have joined the "eicht deutscher," devotees, to whom Stefan George is now repugnant—for the simple reason that he imitated Mallarme. But there are small blemishes. The play, as a whole, is dramatically sincere and moving. The scene where Brandstetter, the ambitious and intriguing old councillor, meets Fries, his opponent, and each gives his view of modern Germany, is worked to a climax in the best Sudermann style.

_Friends_: Germany has become too narrow; that's what it is. Infinite energy is lying unused. . . . And so men play and act the part of the artist and speculate and turn to inanity just to get more air. . . . May God give us a good storm soon, which will scatter everything.

_Brandstetter_: I see nothing but splendour and prosperity. The cities are growing. The fountains are rippling in the market-places. Halls and palaces are shooting up from the ground and statues stand round about. The people crowd into the theatres and laugh or cry just as the poet wills. Scholars and wise men bring us new miracles every day. Millions of chimney caps are smoking throughout the land and even the poor have abundance.

_Friends_: So that's what you see? Indeed?

It is obvious that Sudermann's sympathies are with the first speaker; Triestel's doctrine—"the living God will see to it." &c.—seems to have gained a new supporter.

The last play in the volume, which bears the satirical title of Das Höhere Leben, is a somewhat farcical comedy of light, amorous intrigue and fashionable futility. Except for the character of Von Seltzer, an insane person who falls in love easily and is inclined to misconstrue in a rather
amusing manner, there is nothing particularly remarkable in the play. It is a capably written Stollenstück—that is all.

And that, perhaps, is the chief interest of the volume as a whole. In it Sudermann has returned to the form in which his principal dramatic triumphs were made—the satirical comedy of manners. As in Sodom's Ende, Die Heimat and his first dazzling successes, he has used the play to castigate false ideas and sham moralities. His views have changed considerably in many respects, as I have indicated; the reason, no doubt, is to be ascribed to the growing conservatism of age. There are signs that Sudermann has not remained unaffected by the German super-nationalist aberration of this present time. It is obvious, too, that his technique is not so sure as it was, say, in 1894. Nevertheless, these plays are well worth attention. Apart from their intrinsic interest as pictures of pre-war German life, not to be taken as quite graphically accurate, they are proof of two noteworthy facts, namely, that Sudermann's mind has undergone conversion; while, as regards technique, he has found himself again.

ALEC W. G. RANDALL

Music

THE SERAGLIO

The correct title of this earliest but one of Mozart's operas is Die Entführung aus dem Serail, which does not mean, as was incorrectly stated in the Times the other day, "The Escape from the Harem," but "The Abduction from the Seraglio"—the German word entführung meaning abduction or elopement, not escape, and seraglio having really a larger meaning than harem, being applicable to the whole palace, which includes the harem. I cannot understand why there should have been any objection to Sir Thomas Beecham's advertising this opera as The Seraglio seeing that it was Mozart's first attempt to write not an Italian but a national (German) opera, and as it is being sung in English it would be most illogical to use the Italian title. If advertised, as suggested by Mr. Colles in the Times, as "The Escape from the Harem," it might reduce the attendance at some of the West End music-halls, and introduce a number of people to their own astonishment to perhaps the most charming production Sir Thomas Beecham has yet given us.

The setting, which was thoroughly delightful, was done by Mr. A. P. Allinson, who designed both the scenery and the costumes, and on this occasion did full justice to his opportunity. Each of the four scenes was a joy to eyes wearied by the drab or fussy colour schemes of most of our theatres, and it is difficult to say which was the best; let me, however, just draw attention to the beautiful way that, in the garden scene, Costanza's dark jacket harmonised with the upper border of the background so that when, after moving about the stage in a sort of colour-rhythm, she sat down on the bench, it was as if she had suddenly stepped into a canvas by some modern master. The dressings were as good as the scenery, which is saying a great deal; perhaps the finest creation was the Pasha, whose make-up was one of the best I have ever seen. Mr. Allinson's costumes have none of the over-luxurious ornamentation of Leon Bakst's, they are more economical as to means and scener, and in line, which is to say that though Eastern, as was necessary, they are at the same time Moorish, for Mozart was the most economical, direct, and the least "fluffy" composer who ever lived. Having paid this tribute to Mr. Allinson, let us turn to the singers. Mr. Robert Radford has never done anything better than Osmin the Pasha's servant; vocally all that could be desired, his comedy acting was of the highest order. As Pedrillo, Mr. Alfred Heath was also good, his singing of the fascinating serenade outside Blonde's window was extraordinarily comic, and could not have been bettered, but he is occasionally somewhat vaguely exuberant, and he needs to remember that for the highest comedy every touch must be intelligent and exact. As Blonde, Miss Beatrice Tyas was absolutely right, both her singing and acting have the true Mozartian spirit. She should, however, pay more attention to her enunciation and to her diction; the former is not as clear as it might be: she has a trick of not finishing her words, and the latter is marred by such pronunciations as "raptcher" for rapture, which is abominable. Technically Miss Mignon Nevada is beyond reproach; she handles her voice exquisitely, though it is rather "tight" in the upper register; she has also much personal charm, and you can hear every word she sings, as is the case with Mr. Maurice D'Oinly, who was excellent as Belmonte. The concerted singing was very good. Sir Thomas Beecham conducted and the opera as a whole was one of the best productions we have ever had in London.

The Seraglio was the last novelty of the season, which closed last week. It is to be hoped that Sir Thomas Beecham will be able to reopen in the autumn and give us more new Mozart productions. Figaro, Don Giovannni, or Così fan tutte await Sir Thomas Beecham and Mr. Allinson. I must confess to an appetite for all three, but I would manage to be content with one. Might one also suggest that Sir Thomas Beecham turn his attention to modern French works for the stage. It would be a great achievement, for instance, if he were to produce Ravel's beautiful L'Heure Espagnole. L'Heure Espagnole is a modern landmark because it is an attempt by a composer of the highest gifts to write a modern comic opera. Now I am convinced that the opera of the future will be comic opera; not the comic opera of the past, but an opera ironical, satirical, humorous and grave. Rimsky-Korsakov's Le Cog d'Or is an example of the tendency I mean. The operatic melodrama is dead, for the simple reason that music is too fine and exact a medium for the dull, banal obscurity of melodrama; it gives it away, reveals all its holowness, its essential unreality. I know the general belief is against me here. I know that many who would scorn to frequent drama of The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning type go again and again to hear this sort of thing made into an opera, as if music were a sort of stock device to exhibit which "old thing would do." In fact, music has the same effect on most Europeans that beads and brilliant colours have on savages. This is because they are musically so uneducated that there is little genuine sensitiveness to music as music. The same car which would be offended by a Cockney rhyme or a metrical sing-song will listen admiringly to the most vulgar musical phrases and to the cheapest rhythmic devices, and there is not one person in ten thousand capable of discriminating between a good melody and a bad one, though this is the very heart of criticism. Can one imagine a good Repertory Theatre playing Hamlet on Monday, The School for Scandal on Tuesday, The Wind in the Duck on Friday, and The Bad Girl of the Family on Thursday and Saturday? Yet this is what constantly occurs with an opera, and even a specialist body conducted by highly cultivated musicians like The Oriana Society is capable of something very like it. What explanation can there be except that good taste in music is rarer than in drama and much rarer than in literature. The only cure is to perform the best continually, and any composer who puts a melodrama to music except to burlesque it should be straightforward ridiculed out of existence, for it is like using a razor to cut butter or asking someone to come and take away the manure, in the form of a sonnet.

W. J. TURNER.