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Le Dernier Cri

The concierge seemed both pleased and alarmed when asked about the mystery of the so-called Baroness

by KLAUS MANN

• FICTION •

WHAT a weird idyll it was!—that provincial Austrian watering-place and its representative hotel—the Bellevue. I don't remember who had recommended the dreary place to me, nor why I stayed there for a fortnight or even longer—instead of rushing to the next train at once when I had glimpsed the dull promenade, the sleepy *Kurhaus*, the dusty palm trees adorning the deserted lobby of the Bellevue.

There was something uncannily depressing about that hotel in all its faded splendor. The whole establishment—luridly pompous as it was, with its marble staircases, vast ball-rooms, sultry *chambres séparées*, and secret corridors—exhaled the most penetrating nostalgia for those legendary days of abominable taste and tremendous fun—when Russian Grand Dukes, roaring with savage laughter, used to chase buxom chambermaids; Austrian officers sipped champagne out of a lady's slipper, while handsome princes of the House of Hapsburg kept their "incognito" obstinately, though their true identity was only too well known to everybody: the imposing doorman—very Franz Joseph-like with his magnificent pair of whiskers—had a sardonic smirk when he addressed his Imperial Highness simply as *Herr Baron*. . . . How remote it seems! how unreal!—this withered glamor of forgotten festivals—the weightless

merriment of laughs and waltzes long died away . . . I recognized the charm and the absurdity of that sunken-down world as I gazed dreamily into one of the dingy mirrors decorating the walls of the Bellevue Bar.

It was in that gold-framed mirror that I caught the first glimpse of the Baroness. Her fragile figure gradually emerged from the shady depth of the glass as a mermaid slowly rises from her chilly hiding place. She entered the bar on the arm of her ungainly cavalier. She laughed. She was very attractive.

What I noticed first of all were her eyes—disproportionately big: inconsolably sad under a saucy hat. My heart smote me as I watched her crossing the empty bar—royally erect; shrouded in the provocative sweetness of her perfume and the triumphant cascades of her pearly laugh. I was struck, ravished, bewildered—by the glimmering pallor of her ageless face, the strange elegance of her clothes, and above all, by the disquieting contrast between the elated melody of her laugh and the unfathomable melancholy of her eyes.

Never shall I forget this first performance of her repertoire I witnessed. Her companion was a middle-aged fellow—hook-nosed, swarthy and greasy—probably a minor businessman from the Balkans. They drank champagne—what else could they possibly drink? Champagne is an indispensable ingredient of the traditional setup: it just belongs to the show—as Ophelia's flowers or the death's-head are essential for any *Hamlet* production.

Everything was perfectly *comme il faut*—arranged and acted according to the rituals of a classic pattern. His trivial jokes and her silvery giggle; the naughty refrains of dated French *chansons* that she recited with a provoking nonchalance; his delight and clumsy efforts to be sparkling too: it was altogether like a scene out of a musical comedy—long-rehearsed, often-tested.

While she flirted with him, and called him *mon choux* and *mon petit coco*, she wanted me to know how disgusted she really was with his poor manners and his ugliness. She made faces behind his back and darted scornful glances—just to inform me that she thought him a bore and that he annoyed her to madness. Her disgust was, of course, more honest and authentic than her artificial merriment. Yet, strangely enough, even this tragic attitude of hers was not quite sincere. The suffering that she seemingly tried to conceal, was really just another aspect of the traditional pattern: Here I am, in all my sordid depravity!—my poor heart bleeding, corroded with shame and pain—while I pretend to have a wonderful time with that hideous moron . . .

When she had left, not without having presented me with a plaintive but promising



smile, I asked the barman if he knew who she was. "That dame?" he shrugged his shoulders and seemed slightly shocked, either by my ignorance or else by my frivolous curiosity. "Why, of course, it's the Baroness," he said, not very enthusiastically; then added, while he kept moving his cocktail shaker in a bored, mechanical way: "She's been living here for many years." I was not quite sure if this meant, in his opinion, a fact that spoke for the Baroness, or rather if he disapproved of her long stay at the Bellevue Hotel. While I was still musing on this puzzling question, he informed me, casually but in the discreetly lowered voice of an experienced bawd: "Apartment Thirty-six, in case you're interested . . . But you'd better give her a ring before you drop by to see her. She is pretty busy—sometimes. . ."

I assured him, rather indignantly, that I certainly had no such intentions, whereupon he shrugged his shoulders again and retired.

A date with her? What a ludicrous idea! True, I liked the dainty oval of her pallid face, and there was something in her voice and smile that affected me. She had been rather exciting, indeed, when she gave me those treacherous looks, behind the back of her lover . . . But—a date? It would probably be expensive—and hardly worth the price. . .

Yet, when I crossed the lobby I stopped at the desk from where the *concierge*, Herr Tulpitz, majestically supervised all goings-on of the Bellevue. He was an imposing old fellow, Herr Tulpitz—; in fact, an ideal *concierge*—dignified, thoughtful and kind. He would tell me, in a plain and yet tactful way, if it was advisable to make friends with that so-called Baroness.

His reaction to my casual question was apt to astonish if not to frighten me. He



seemed unduly pleased and at the same time alarmed, tickled as well as puzzled, and altogether muddled and overwhelmed with excitement.—"The Baroness de La Motte-Tribolière?" he asked—pronouncing the grandiose name with a certain solemn tenderness. There was a long, stony pause before he added—all severity and serious disapproval—"I am surprised, Sir. Very much surprised, indeed."

I smiled uncomfortably, feeling rather foolish and guilty. Finally I ventured to say, very timidly: "She is sort of famous, I suppose?"

"Sort of famous?"—Now he seemed saddened rather than angry. His eyes, moist with sorrowful love, stared through me without seeing me.—"She is the Pride of the Bellevue," he stated at last, nodding gravely. "His Imperial Highness used to call her 'my darling butterfly'..."—How soft his voice sounded now! He shook his head—absorbed in memories. "The Pride of the Bellevue..." he repeated musingly. "The Pride of the Bellevue—for twenty-seven years..."

"For twenty-seven years?"

He started as if awakening from a ghastly dream.—"You'll excuse me, Sir," he said briefly, in a strangely peremptory tone—it was almost rude—I had never seen him in such a state. "I am very busy."

He concluded the conversation as a monarch concludes an audience.

When I passed by the next morning, however, he beckoned graciously, and as I stopped in front of his throne-like desk, he whispered to me with a sort of restrained passion: "How are you this morning, Herr Baron?" (He knew, of course, that I am no Baron, and had never called me so before.) "I hope you had a good night and have forgotten all about that rubbish I told you yesterday."

I pretended not to understand.—"The Baroness de La Motte-Tribolière," he murmured, enjoying, this time, the pleasure of pronouncing her name with a certain apprehensive hastiness as if disturbed by a feeling of guilt. "How foolish I was to say that she has been living here for twenty-five years!"

"Twenty-seven years," I corrected him.

"What's the difference?" he gave a tormented chuckle. "It's a silly line, anyway. I just tried to be funny—that's all. I have no idea, really, how long the Baroness lives here, at the Bellevue. It may be five years, or nine—or thirty... In any case, I should be more careful about what I say. That stupid twaddle of mine could do harm to her reputation."

Her reputation?—I couldn't help smiling somewhat sardonically. Herr Tulpitz, guessing my thoughts, nodded gloomily. "I know, I know—people are malicious nowadays—nasty and narrowminded—that's what they are. All that sordid gossip—I know it only too well..."—There was a silence while he seemed to brood over some depressing mystery—caressing the silky silver of his magnificent whiskers. Finally he pulled himself together as if he had come to a grim but imperative con-

clusion. "I may as well tell you right away," he began, his voice trembling with grave emotion. He paused, then continued with a sort of desperate bluntness: "She is no Baroness, really. She may have been married, of course, to a Baron de La Motte-Tribolière—somewhere, in Monte Carlo or Cairo—many years ago... But now—under the present circumstances—she is just a woman, who..."

—He didn't find the right word, and announced at last: A *courtesan*—that's what she really is."

"A courtesan"... What a queer, pretentious designation! It sounded old-fashioned and somehow fantastic... "So she is simply a wh..."

He interrupted me with a scathing look and a majestic gesture. "Now, listen to me, young man!" he said slowly, in an ominously lowered voice. "When I say 'a courtesan,' I mean a courtesan—nothing else. I am sorry to see that you—as most young men nowadays—don't know the difference between a cheap prostitute and a *grande cocotte*. The Baroness de La Motte-Tribolière is a master in her profession—just as Signor Caruso or Madame Sarah Bernhardt are masters in their own respective realms. Gentlemen of great fortune and reputation flock to her attractive personality. I could tell you stories about men in the highest positions whom she has bewitched, dominated—and ruined..." He faltered and blushed—which made a pathetic impression—: this wrinkled, paternal face, glowing with that momentary flush. Then he continued—once more composed and dignified:

"However, she is a lady of great talents and considerable background. I daresay, indeed, that she is *the last one*—the last worthy representative of the great style, the authentic tradition. I have seen many of them in my time; but only few who matched the Baroness de La Motte-Tribolière—and none, actually none, who surpassed her.—My word of honor!"

he concluded in a firm, though slightly trembling voice. "She is absolutely first-rate. Believe an old connoisseur who definitely knows what he is talking about."

Mr. Tulpitz's solemn little harangue had made a considerable impression on me. I recalled his words while I kept watching the Baroness—increasingly attracted by her appearance. So *that's* what she looks like—I wondered as I gazed at her—: the last of the *grandes cocottes*...

It so happened, time and again, that she and I were the only persons present in the lobby or in the bar—for an hour, or even longer. She would sit there—numbed with boredom or melancholy, absorbed in bleak and mysterious dreams. She was much

alone—dallying her time with yellowed magazines or just staring in front of her with unseeing empty eyes. Sometimes she smiled at me—a momentary, meaningless smile—or she gave me a hasty glance, full of suffering and seduction.

How did she manage to make her living, being so extremely languid and inactive? How could a professional courtesan afford to waste valuable hours in an armchair—supine, lethargic, motionless like a brittle statue—a precious doll made of glass, silk, and a very delicate, almost transparent marble?

She changed, of course, and suddenly turned sparkling and animated, when she received visitors—which occurred but rarely; about once every other day, in late afternoon. Then she showed off and glittered—quivering with alluring caprices and pearly laughter. How enthralling she was!—how delightful, with the swift elegance of her nimble movements! At the same time, however, the dazzling performance she gave was apt to depress me a little. Hers was a certain perfunctory verve—a routine frolicsomeness as one may detect in the feats and smiles of an aging prima ballerina—still celebrated, though already weary—who executes the same ballet for the thousandth time.—It was due partly to the appearance of her cavaliers, I suppose, that the whole picture seemed so sinister. Most

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of them were rather dreary, indeed—elderly chaps with worn-out, flaccid faces, nasty old débauchés, grotesque figures with monocles and ridiculous wigs, trying desperately to look dashing and youthfully wicked. Where did they come from, and why did they gather just here? Did the Baroness pick up her lovers in hospitals and asylums? Had she no boy friends under seventy? There was something wrong—undeniably.

Why did she never go out?

This was the weirdest feature of her puzzling conduct: that she never left the hotel; never breathed a bit of open air, never set foot on the street. She seemed a prisoner of the Hotel Bellevue—doomed to spend the rest of her sinful days in that gloomy lobby, guarded by the grim tenderness of Herr Tulpitz. Like a nun, bound by a solemn vow never to leave the convent, she kept wandering, a spectral and perfumed saint, between the dusty lobby, the sultry bar, and her own apartment, Number Thirty-six: scandalously opened to a vicious public, but, for some mysterious reason, inaccessible to me...

Was she wanted by the police, and The Bellevue, was it the only place where she felt out of reach—as, in the pious days of antiquity, safety used to be granted even to murderers, as long as they remained within the walls of a sanctuary? Or was she bound by contract with the management, obliging her to restrict her activities to the rooms of this hotel? Or, perhaps, she had to avoid any contact with the outside world, because the artificial mask of her face could not stand the natural touch of sun, wind, and rain? Even the mild breezes of a spring day might prove fatal to the perishable substance of her delicate flesh: it would dissolve presently under the caresses of the lively air—just as certain mummies, excellently preserved in the dark coziness of their grave chambers, dissolve promptly when exposed to humidity, cold and heat. Or was she simply frightened by the ugliness and cruel sobriety of our modern world?

I had started to jot down some fragmentary notes concerning her character and plight—the intricate phenomenon of her existence. It was a thorough analysis of that odd character—the last courtesan—I was pondering on. The gradual disappearance of that female type, called *la grande cocotte* or great courtesan—wasn't this a fact that deserved the most serious consideration? She just died away—like certain gigantic salamanders, dwarfish dogs, or dated literary mannerisms. How could chroniclers of current history neglect so stirring a development—so bitter and cruel a loss? After all, they used to play a crucial role in world history—those colorful ladies, from Aspasia to the aristocratic vamps of the Renaissance,

from Pompadour and Du Barry to the splendid *demi-mondaines* of the Nineteenth Century—half-outcasts, half-queens: living in glamor, dying in misery, and finally immortalized by Balzac and Heinrich Heine, Maupassant and Zola, Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec. Nowadays, of course, there still are ladies of dubious reputation—kept women, *des femmes fatales* of many different shades—"oomph girls," greedy adventuresses. But their style and taste, their tricks and their ambitions have changed deplorably. Now, they want to make a career in the movies or in the secret service of a Totalitarian State. The whole game has become business-like and prosaic—no romanticism, any longer.

A world convulsed by the fever of a permanent crisis has no room or time for the luxurious whims of individuals. These are bad days, indeed, for the *ars amandi*. A new militant pathos, noisy, crude, and relentless, sweeps away the sins and charms of a more settled society. A new perfunctory libertinism depreciates the traditional rites and subtle circumstantialities of costly vices: the odd morality of 1940 has no objection to the bombing of open cities, but disapproves strictly of sensual refinements that might be pernicious to the national strength. The rich finance political parties instead of expensive women; the poor get intoxicated by the thudding eloquence of dictators; tyrants turn ascetic—youngsters murderous—and the Baroness de La Motte-Tribolière spends her days in gloomy loneliness—musing upon the cruel change of all worldly things... Doesn't she resemble, indeed, those tragic witches whom we meet occasionally in the sophisticated fairy tales of a baroque German romanticism? They are very lonely, too—those last sorceresses—terribly forsaken in a world from which the philosophy of Enlightenment and the invention of the electric light have banished all mystery and magic...

Thus I speculated and dreamed—writing down, from time to time, a few sporadic words and sentences—when the Baroness suddenly stood behind me. She had approached—noiseless and feline: I only noticed her as I felt, with a slight and rather pleasant shudder, the icy tenderness of her fingertips on my glowing temples. This was her silvery laugh—melodious, though somewhat forced. "How shockingly busy you are! I can't stand this any more. For half an hour I have been watching you. It makes me incredibly nervous to see a man working with such ugly zeal. What are you scribbling there, anyhow? Is it about me? Naughty boy you are!" She lifted a white, brittle finger, waving it with playful severity, an unsuitable and rather ludicrous gesture. Never before had I seen her so completely de-

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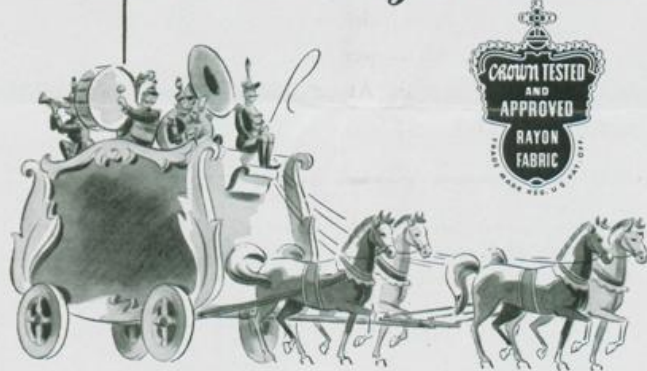
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prived of all charm and dignity. "And, besides, what do you know about me?" she inquired, full of anxious suspicion. "Nothing, I suppose—except those ridiculous tales of Herr Tulpitz—poor old thing." The last words she pronounced slowly, with a strangely lurking twinkle in her eyes.

I assured her hastily: "Herr Tulpitz is as discreet as he could be. I never heard a single word of gossip from him."

She shrugged her shoulders and seemed slightly disappointed. "Poor old thing," she repeated; and then—while she began to examine her make-up in a tiny mirror: "He is nuts," she added. "Mad as hell. Poor old darling."

There was something surprisingly hard and vulgar in her words and the abrupt little laugh that followed. Her smile and voice, however, turned softer as she continued: "He lives in a world of his own. I am sure he believes, really, that he used to be very rich, and people called him Excellency, and that we lived in a fine apartment in Paris—he and I—many years ago. It's quite a story. I was the great courtesan—and he the nobleman who had decided to save me... But I fell in love with the Imperial Prince, and there was a scandal in Vienna—a tremendous scandal, with *tout le monde* talking about it... So we fled to Paris, and there I betrayed him again; for I was the incorrigible one—and he loved me, and then there was a war, and he lost all his money, and his title: all he kept was his love for me—his eternal love—and I made money for him. He was not jealous anymore—simply couldn't afford it. But he still did love me. We had a wonderful time before we got stranded in this dreary place... But this, of course, was a long, long time ago..."

Her voice had assumed the singing and drowsy rhythm in which mothers recite fairy tales to their children. But then again there was that hard, aggressive little clink of her nervous laugh. "It's all sheer invention, of course," she concluded. "But he really believes it. And why shouldn't he, after all? If it makes him feel better..."

Then she asked me, very casually, if I cared to take her out for dinner tonight.

When I met her again in the lobby, only two or three hours later, she had changed clothes and looked strikingly handsome, indeed—with that delicate face of hers, shining in its translucent pallor under the heavy crown of her rich, auburn hair. I asked her where she wanted to go, whereupon she pierced me with a sad, reproachful glance. "There is no place to go." She shuddered as if an icy wind had touched her bare shoulders. There she stood, her lips tightly closed—haunted by mysterious fears or bound by secret vows and obligations, frail and beautiful in her gorgeous costume.

It was the most astounding sort of an evening gown she wore—a complicated creation with an endless train; overloaded with feathers, jewels, colored laces, all kinds of fancy draperies. It might have been a curious model of 1890—or the saucy caprice of a super-modern dressmaker... Her fingers twisted nervously about the purple feathers of an enormous fan. I said to her: "You look more exciting than ever,"—which made her smile again presently.

"The restaurant of our charming hotel," she announced with a grandiose gesture toward the dining room that lay in gloomy darkness. "It still is the most dandy spot far and wide." Then she added, with that false note of jocularly that sometimes made her conversation so embarrassing: "Unless you think it compromising to dine in full view of your friends with a wicked girl like me."

I replied that I did not expect to meet many acquaintances in that desolate place. But she insisted, with disquieting merriment: "Oh, there are plenty of them. You'll see, *mon ami*—you'll see."

But all I saw as we entered the restaurant, were empty tables and chairs. Only one table was set and dimly lit by an old-fashioned lamp.

"Gaston has reserved my favorite corner for us!" cooed the Baroness. "C'est charmant! The Duchess will explode with rage... Don't look now! There she is..."

I felt rather alarmed as she sent her haughty, distracted smile through the murky twilight of the deserted room. "The Duke cuts me too," she whispered, very close to me—angry and amused. "Ah, *comme c'est rigolo!*—But what else could he do, after all? She would certainly kill him if he dared to have a glimpse at me..."

No doubt, her mind wandered a little. She saw this deserted place swarming with enemies and admirers, rivals, lovers and bawds—she heard the familiar whirr of gossip and intrigues, the whisper of desire, envy and disapproval, as she had heard it at the same place before—how many years ago?—"La petite Lolote!" she giggled. "Mon dieu! All dressed up like a circus horse. I wonder, really, what the colonel finds in her."

She calmed down a little as we finally reached our table. "The food is lousy here," she observed, and suddenly had, in the flickering shine of the lamp, the sullen and weary face of a very old woman. Then, rather abruptly, she plunged into a swift and elegant conversation. I listened to her winged and empty chatter—half-amused, half-bewildered, as most of the names and events she referred to sounded strangely unfamiliar to me. Besides, it struck me as somewhat weird that she should be so thoroughly *au courant* as to the gossip of the smart set in Venice, Cannes and Paris, the races in Auteuil and Monte Carlo, the opera season in London, the

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latest scandals of Biarritz and Baden-Baden—though she never left this provincial place nor even this hotel... There was a natural sophistication in her way of talking—something suave and brilliant, but at the same time stale, frozen, deprived of authentic life. As I finally ventured a few remarks about recent Hollywood films, she grew silent and seemed hurt—her face drooping as if I had offended her by endless tirades on a subject entirely beyond her understanding. "These flowers," she interrupted me at last. "These lilacs... gorgeous, aren't they? You don't know what flowers mean to me, my friend." She had a wan, mawkish smile, and the gesture was a fumbling one, as she pointed to those flowers she saw. "I adore them," she whispered. But the table was empty. It was a barren table she smiled at.

"There are no flowers," I said, rather cruelly.

She nodded sadly. "I know, I know... No flowers—alas! No flowers, any more..."

There was a silence, while her eyes wandered with the smoke of her cigarette. When she finally spoke again, her voice sounded hollow, infinitely sad. "No flowers, any more," she insisted, and then assumed the bleak dignity of Cassandra, the prophetess. "There will be hard times, my poor friend," she predicted, her voice tolling like the great bells of the Last Judgment. "Cruel

times and bloody tribulations! The great ordeal—I can see its approach... We are doomed—all of us. You, and I, and all these lusty men and women. The flowers, the champagne, the beautiful girls; artists, courtesans, princes, adventurers, and poets—doomed. No games any more, no luxury, no joy, no tenderness. Only discipline, and boredom, cruelty, and death.

"You seem in high spirits, Madame la Comtesse." This was the paternal bass of Herr Tulpitz, the *concierge*. While she lamented, he had slowly approached from the shadowy background.

"Hello, dear old little Excellency!" cooed the Baroness—abruptly renouncing her Cassandra-like attitude. "Enchantée de vous voir, cher ami!"

He kissed her fingertips: "How are you tonight, Madame? Enjoying yourself, I presume?"

She nodded, with a faint, conventional smile. "The Baron is good company," she observed, rather vaguely—whereupon Herr Tulpitz, with a swift and surprising motion, produced an object that he had hidden behind his back. It was a bunch of lilacs, completely withered and faded.

"These beautiful flowers," he announced with a tender solemnity, "were just delivered."

"Where do they come from?" she asked, snatching the withered blooms, "from him?"

"From His Imperial Highness," he confirmed, and smirked as he

saw the beatific smile upon her mouth. "Thanks," she whispered—hiding her radiant face between the faded flowers.

What a nightmarish—what an enchanting scene! Herr Tulpitz—more Franz Joseph-like than ever in a baroque and pompous uniform with broad epaulets and dazzling decorations—had started to perform a sort of fantastic pantomime—frisking and tripping with the ungainly grace of a trained bear around that bedizened and bejewelled figure, the Baroness de La Motte-Tribolière, Pride of the Bellevue, the last one of the great courtesans. There she stood, askance under the flaring light, an amazing bird—overloaded with glaring feathers, bangles, and the tremendous weight of her years. Was she ninety years old? Or a hundred? In any case, excellently preserved by insanity.

Was Herr Tulpitz mad too? Was he her lover? Her doctor? Or simply her employé whom she paid for his role in this macabre show?

Now he capers, takes little bows—surprisingly elastic despite his age; all in raptures about her colorful setup. "My darling butterfly!" he exclaims. "Ma chérie! Ah! plus ravissante que jamais!"—And she acknowledges his compliment with the dreadful smile of lunacy.

Maybe the whole setup is a clever trick to catch the imagination of travelers. Herr Tulpitz may have had the idea of luring victims, this way, to the costly debauches

of Apartment Thirty-six... Who could see through those sordid mysteries? Who knows, really, what Herr Tulpitz means as he cries out—fawning and bowing: "This gown! It's a dream—*ma foi!* These colors! What style! Just arrived from Paris, I presume? One can easily see it. *Dernier Cri*—that's what it is! *Dernier Cri!*"

"*Dernier Cri!*" she repeats—and suddenly bursts into gales of laughter. What an appalling laugh!—infinitely worse than any weeping could be. How it distorts her face, shakes her fragile body! And her voice—how woeful it sounds! "*Dernier Cri!*" she whimpers again and again, convulsed with laughter and agony. "You are right, my friend! Oh, how right you are! Our last scream—here it is! I am the last scream—the last sigh—the last grin of an epoch... *Le dernier cri—c'est moi...*"

She raises her arms, spreads and stretches them—one of her hands clasp the bloody purple of the huge fan, while the other hand holds the withered bouquet. Her laugh sounds like desperate crying; but they are dry—her beautiful eyes, disproportionately big in the dainty oval of her ageless face.

This tremendous pose of exuberant despair lasts for several seconds. Finally Herr Tulpitz, transformed again into a sensible old man, pats her trembling shoulders with his heavy hand. "*Pauvre enfant!*" he murmurs. "Come, come! It's time to go to bed..." #

Esquire on the Record

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nation's 389,762 exclusive subscription societies. You can also register the order of your choice for Bela Bartok's Quartet No. 5

Louis Grünberg's *Daniel Jazz*
Aaron Copland's Sextet for Piano, Clarinet and String Quartet
Marc Blitzstein's *No For An Answer* (excerpts)

Paul Hindemith's *Das Marienleben*
Charles Ives's "Concord" Sonata
Frederick Jacobi's Sonata No. 2
Prokofiev's Sonata for Two Violins
Schönberg's String Quartet No. 2
Roger Sessions' Piano Sonata
Stravinsky's Concerto for Two Pianos
Virgil Thomson's *Stabat Mater* for String Quartet and Voice.

They will record your preference first, but want it understood the League of Composers assumes no liability for broken vases or blackened eyes in your apartment.

Perhaps while you are in the joining mood, you might like to enroll in the Broadcast Recording Club, a non-profit organization devoted to the preservation, via phonograph discs, of outstanding radio broadcasts. The Club consists of a group of music lovers who wish to possess recordings of fine music and fine performances heard over the radio but not available commercially. Membership entitles you to records at cost; but

no records are sold individually since the club was not organized to sell discs on a commercial basis. Alongside each of the available

records are notes giving an honest estimate of the technical quality and condition. Would that commercial companies were as frank!

Orchestra Leaders' Choice

Asked for a selection of favorites from among their own recordings, these band leaders named the following discs:

RAY NOBLE		DEL COURTNEY	
<i>Mad About the Boy</i>	Victor 25020	<i>Would You Be So Kindly</i>	
<i>The Very Thought of You</i>			Okeh 5778
	Victor 24657	<i>Now I Lay Me Down to Dream</i>	Okeh 5720
<i>Moon Over Burma</i>	Columbia 35804	<i>I Wouldn't Take a Million</i>	Okeh 5692
<i>Sleepytime Gal</i>	Columbia 35557	<i>Lazy Lack-a-daisy Melody</i>	Okeh 5662
<i>Faraway</i>	Columbia 35850	<i>It Wouldn't Be Love</i>	Okeh 5616
TED WEEMS		JACK TEAGARDEN	
<i>Ghost of Piccolo Pete</i>	Decca 2380	<i>Octoroon</i>	Brunswick 8388
<i>Nola</i> (Elmo Tanner whistling)	Decca 204	<i>Wolverine Blues</i>	Columbia 35297
<i>The Martins and the Coys</i>	Decca 810	<i>I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues</i>	Brunswick 8397
<i>I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now</i>	Decca 2919	<i>Peg of My Heart</i>	Columbia 35727
<i>There'll Be Some Changes Made</i>	Decca 3044	<i>The Blues</i>	Varsity 8218
HENRY BUSSE		RAY KINNEY	
<i>Hot Lips</i>	Decca 198	<i>Beneath the Banyan Tree</i>	Decca 536
<i>Wang Wang Blues</i>	Decca 198	<i>Hawaiian Hospitality</i>	Decca 858
<i>When Day Is Done</i>	Decca 774	<i>Song of the Islands</i>	Victor 26676
<i>He's Just a Horn-Tootin' Fool</i>	Decca 789	<i>Hawaii Across the Sea</i>	Victor 27290
<i>Begin the Beguine</i>	Decca 2107	<i>Lovely Hula Hands</i>	Victor 26799

Interesting are comparisons of Toscanini interpretations. For example, Toscanini's performance of Beethoven's *Fifth* on Victor records is strikingly different from the performance he gave on his October 22, 1938 broadcast. The broadcast performance has an abandon and drive not apparent in the more restrained recorded version. However, as the club bulletin says, the recorded performance is undoubtedly more nearly what Toscanini wants. One's preference depends on what he expects of the symphony.

All performances in Studio 8-H suffer from lack of resonance. Some of Toscanini's BBC recordings are over-monitored. His New York Philharmonic Symphony records are older but quite good when not badly monitored. BBC records have resonance and fine recorded tone. His Philharmonic-Symphony records present the best performances, except for some of his latest NBC Symphony releases, like the Brahms Piano Concerto with Horowitz, which he made in Carnegie Hall. His discs made with the NBC outfit, of course, have the greatest clarity of detail.

In general, except when the commercial recording is bad, club members are urged to get commercial records. There is less likelihood of mistakes in performance