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two pedantries (hie, and ditty), nor does it bear any resemblance to a classical farewell. Such as Horace's:

Vivere si recte nescis, decede peritis.
Lusisti satis, edisti satis atque bibisti:
Tempus abire tibi est, ne potum largius acquo
Rideat et pulset lasciva decentius aetas.

CYRIL CONNOLLY

THE OTHER CHELSEA

EVERY novelist should go to Chelsea: not to the Chelsea of long-haired, big-bowed, art-and-crafty tradition, but to the flower show. It is an English institution, comparable with the church, Ascot, Hyde Park, the promenade at Eastbourne, the pavilion at Lords'. Here, as at such places, the novelist will have the pleasanter kind of opportunity of observing a certain segment of English character at its best. If he goes to Hampstead Heath in order to observe the Cockney, to Wembley in order to check up on the Midlander, he must go to Chelsea in order to put his finger on the pulse of the English middle class. He may see there all the stock English types, with the possible exception of bookmakers, and a thousand varieties of them. The dramatis personæ at Chelsea are, in fact, as interesting as the flowers.

Flowers have singular effects on character. The beauty of flowers has this in common with the beauty of women: it creates envy, jealousy, malice, pride, covetousness, heart-burning and much else in the category of unbeautiful virtues. The veneer of every-day life covers these characteristics; Chelsea uncovers them. I base this remark on the observation of some years. Every year brings the same people to Chelsea. It brings especially the same women: the same, masterful, ageless, too-good-to-be-true women to whom the possession of flowers is on a par with the possession of gowns and pekingese. To such women all the world is a battle-ground, every man a victim. At Chelsea they are to be observed in the heat of full-blooded action. "And may I grow the salpiglossis from seed or must I plant plants? Yes, I know that, but I have no heat. I don't need heat? Then what do I need? You have no seed? Why haven't you seed? My dear man, even if I had heat and you hadn't seed, what good could it be?"

Such conversations are not fantastic; they are to be heard at any stall. They come from the mouths of women who would, no doubt, refer to their gentle birth; masterly, ill-mannered, inconsiderate, eagle-eyed dictators. They are listened to, in contrast, by the most considerate of people: decent, quiet-mannered, intelligent nurserymen schooled by a life-time's devotion to plants and flowers. I will not labour these contrasts; the novelist will observe them for himself.

He may, however, be urged to observe another thing: how often the women of Chelsea resemble the flowers of Chelsea. Those masterful eagle-eyed women are somehow like orchids, hard and untouchable. Blowsy matrons dump and roll along like baggy calceolarias. Gayish spinsters, long since shapeless and long since past their best, flaunt themselves like dahlias. There are women as quiet and decent as mauve stocks. Virgins of middle age strain hard to keep up the white Madonna sweetness of lilies. Old ladies in pre-Edwardian black shuffle from stall to stall like bonneted columbines. There are women as blowsy and bosomy as peonies, girls as sweet as pinks.

And in case these comparisons should seem to belittle the flowers, let me say at once that the flowers, this year, are as good as ever. In some cases better. For one thing, there seems to be more space between one exhibit and another. For once there is room to see and breathe. There is—or it may be only my fancy—less fierceness of colour, more taste. The craze for gaudy rhododendrons seems to have died down. Messrs. Bolton's sweet peas and Mr. Sutton's schizanthus were masterly combinations of softer tones. Mr. Lionel de Rothschild's amaryllis were superb and glorious, but not

vulgar. The lovely *Embothrium coccineum*, exhibited by Mr. Veitch and Messrs. Gill and Son, was spectacular but not blatant. The Bird of Paradise, *Strelitzia Regina*, orange and purple and bird-shaped in every petal, was crazy but credible, very royal but dignified. The new flowers were few, and except for the new Acacias—mimosas, better known—not striking. Mr. Clarence Elliot's *Puya* species from Chile was strange, but somehow like a painted lady gone stale.

I much preferred Messrs. Caxton's criminal exhibit of strawberries, which ought, by this time, to be banned by law. It is the vilest of juicy temptations. Some day it will attract yet another example of English character to Chelsea. Someone will muscle in.

H. E. BATES

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Bitter Harvest" at the St. Martin's Theatre

This dramatisation of the Byron-Augusta tragedy is a play from which one rises with very mixed feelings. One is conscious, first of all, that a really magnificent opportunity has been put to comparatively little use. It was typical of Byron that every passage of his private and public career should assume a startlingly—at times, almost blatantly dramatic—form; and never was his existence more dramatic than in his relationship with his half-sister and his wife—indeed, the whole episode seems to have been modelled on the lines of classical drama, where infatuation drives the victim towards his doom. The material of the play, then, is remarkably rich; and, judging by their applause, one had no doubt that the audience at St. Martin's Theatre found the piece unusually moving. Mr. Eric Portman gives a notable performance as Byron. Moreover, he succeeds in looking the part; and, though his nose is a shade too aquiline and he is inclined to overdo the famous limp, there are moments when his resemblance to certain portraits—particularly Harlow's profile—is so striking as to produce a slight feeling of discomfort. Miss Mabel Terry-Lewis is dignified and impressive (but not nearly crafty enough) as Lady Melbourne. Miss Mary Glynn battles gallantly with the difficulty of portraying "the good Goose's" enigmatic character. Miss Joyce Kennedy, hampered by somewhat foolish lines, makes a sprightly and personable Lady Oxford. Miss Norah Robinson, portraying Annabella Milbanke (misspelt "Millbanke" on the programme) manages to show why his wife's angelic assiduities had the effect of bringing out Byron's most perverse and diabolic side. Unfortunately, the dramatist has not been content to stick to the truth, and in three important scenes has resorted to wild invention. Mrs. Leigh appears at the end of Act I Scene I as a complete stranger—Byron does not recognise her name—when, in fact, they had been corresponding for several months. Secondly, Lady Oxford was abroad during the whole period of Byron's marriage and could not have attended a tea-party at Piccadilly Terrace. Thirdly, it is ridiculous to represent Sir Walter Scott—a mere literary acquaintance—as rushing down from Edinburgh to take Byron to task for his behaviour towards his wife; and this scene, which occurs in Act II—Byron sobbing over his writing-desk and Sir Walter pouring out fatherly platitudes—reaches a high level of banality. There are other inaccuracies and improbabilities; and it is annoying, for example, to see the dark-haired, statuesque Augusta portrayed as a fragile and diaphanous blonde. But, on the whole, *Bitter Harvest* has been carefully staged with good décor and costumes.

Ballet at The Alhambra

M. Fokine has the profound respect of all enthusiasts for Ballet. More than any other individual he made Ballet a living art by his genius for choreography. The *Ballets de Monte Carlo* at the Alhambra are under his personal direction, the programme informs us. But the performance does not in any way realise the expectations which this announcement aroused. Nemtchinova dances, it is true. And though she lacks that complete harmony which in the very greatest dancers joins toe to finger in lines which are always changing but always inevitable, personal, and right, she is a superb technician and her feet are a perpetual pleasure to watch. But the performance we saw given by the rest of the company was disappointing. M. Oboukhoff as François in *Coppélia* impressed us even less in his support of Nemtchinova than in his solo dancing. The *corps de ballet* was not flawlessly corporate but much better than what we have had lately.