

By LOTTE LEHMANN

I am glad that Christmas and New Years are over. Should not ~~this~~ hour of the beginning of the new year be one of reckoning with one's self - a backward glance upon all that was good and bad - and a particular greeting full of hope for the coming year.

Since my mother is no longer here, I turn away from these days which were for me days of celebration with my family... For then I always feel with double grief how wanting my life is without my mother, and how much her death has loosened the roots which bind me to my native land.

The whole world is to be sure, more now than ever before, the home of the artist. Railroads are our living quarters, our "homelife" we find in hotel rooms ... The splendour and romance which presumably surround the life of a "star" have scarcely a place in her private life. So I can understand, as was recently the case in a family of celebrated artists, that a father should wish to provide for his daughter a quieter more homely kind of happiness than the ups and downs of the hectic life of the artist. And yet what is so relative as the concept of happiness? ... Such a talent will, I believe, in spite of paternal protests, do what it must do. It will suffer happiness and grief - doubly suffer if God has given it the heightened sensitivity of an artist's soul, which is at the same time a blessing and a curse. For we all bear the crown as a responsibility .... why should a talented child be happier if it leads a peaceful "normal" life? Always there will be the dream: if only I had followed my calling! This child has come to know the intoxication which lies in the devotion of one's life to music - and this intoxication will live on in her desires and will give her no peace. A father wants to see his daughter happy! And he forbids her to be an artist! Is it not as if one said to a flower: "Do not bloom, I see an angry hailstorm approaching in the sky, it will kill you ... Do not open little bud ..!?" Was God not wiser when he placed in a soul his greatest blessing - talent?

Certainly nothing is perfection. We pay for everything in life, for every hour of joy we pay with disillusionment and bitterness. And joy and grief fluctuate more

violently in the life of an artist than they do in that of the layman. Nevertheless I should not want my life changed in any way. That is no assertion of a restless, superficial attitude toward life. Oh no. But I know that my fate determined that I must be an artist, because I am one. How could my petty human understanding want to change what was written for me in the stars ? ... And do we not all, each in his own sphere, stand as if on one shore looking across to the other shore as if there lay fulfillment ? ... We yearn and wish to be where we cannot be, as long as we live. But it is good to know that wishes and longings are only dreams which are good and bad for us. And that in the end we still stand at that place which fate decreed to be ours - with all its dissatisfaction, all its bitterness, all its inadequacies - and with the few hours of genuine realization of happiness . I know no greater joy, than the feeling that we can only truly and deeply feel, if we know : I have fulfilled a high, wonderful mission as I could fulfill it only with my whole being, with my entire devotion and with a complete spending of myself.