

Why New York Must Become the New Paris

Mme. de Saint-Point, French Poet and Dancer, Who Finds Fifth Avenue Ridiculous, Describes "La Metachorie," New Art

MME. VALENTINE DE SAINT-POINT, poet, painter, dramatist, and philosopher, believes that New York is to be the Paris of the future. She has begun to make it so.

Such was the feeling of the representative of THE NEW YORK TIMES who recently talked with this brilliant Frenchwoman in her sumptuous studio on Thirty-sixth Street. Curtains of colored silk drawn across the windows shut out every glimpse of the New York afternoon. The studio is a long room, decorated chiefly in the Oriental spirit, with Chinese tapestries hung on the walls, tall brown and golden jars and vases about, and a huge flat earthen bowl, filled with many-colored tropical fruits, in the centre of the floor. A little hemlock tree stands in a pot near one of the windows, and in its branches, on the day that THE TIMES representative called at the studio, clambered Mitzi, Madame's pet marmoset. This may not have been Paris, but it certainly was not New York.

Madame herself, clad in rich blue draperies, with many jewels and a golden anklet, reclined on a great couch. On cushions at her feet sat Rudyard Chenniviere and Vivian du Mas. M. Chenniviere is one of Madame's musical collaborators, writing the music which accompanies her dances. M. du Mas is a painter, and designs the light and color schemes of her dances.

Mme. de Saint-Point is the founder of a movement to which she has given the name La Metachorie. This is a combination of Greek words meaning "beyond the dance." La Metachorie, or Metachory, as it may be called, has to do with poetry, painting, the drama, music, the dance; indeed, with all forms of creative art. In her dances the purpose is to express not emotions but ideas—that is the object of the music, of the poem which the dance interprets, which is read before the dance, of the light and color effects. The lights are so arranged that the dancer is in a colored atmosphere, her body being luminous. The color is varied according to the idea of the dance. In addition, a scent is scattered, appropriate to the idea to be expressed. The dancer's face is veiled, and the draperies are used to simplify the lines of the figure.

The theories of Metachory attracted much attention in Paris before the war—the fact that their originator was a grandniece of the great Lamartine and a granddaughter of the Marquis de Glans de Cessiat being much in their favor. Many of the most famous of the modern French composers wrote music to accompany Mme. de Saint-Point's dances, among them being Claude Debussy.

With great animation, accompanied with many expressive gestures, Mme. de Saint-Point told of the tragic passing of the artistic life of Paris, and of her hope for the establishment in New York of a new artistic and literary capital of the world—a dream which she hopes to help make a reality. She talked sometimes in French, sometimes in English, and from their cushions on the floor M. Chenniviere and M. du Mas listened, now and then eagerly joining in the conversation.

"Artistic life in Paris," said Madame, "has been stopped by the war. The galleries are closed, many of the revues have ceased publication. The young painters and poets and musicians have gone to the war, and many of them have

been killed. Charles Peguy is dead, Charles du Mas is dead, Jean Milliere is dead. These are only a few names from the long list, the frightful toll which the war has taken from the genius of the world. Mario Maunier is a prisoner in Germany. And of course all the world knows the tragic and noble story of the death of the composer Magnard.

"In Paris people have no time or inclination to think of the arts. They are too busy with the terrible actualities of the war. And although with the coming

millions in buying from Europe old paintings, old furniture, even old buildings. When they build a house or a public building, they copy some famous thing they have seen in Europe. There can be no progress in art in these conditions. America must not take old things from old countries, America must develop her own new art.

"When a millionaire wishes to spend some of his millions on a new home, he should summon young American architects, artists, designers, and tell them



Mme. Valentine de Saint-Point.

of peace there will come a return to the ways of peace, a resumption of painting and music and the rest, yet many of the artists will be dead. Paris will have to wait for a new generation of artists to grow up. It is the little boys now in school who must make the poems and pictures that will be France's next contributions to the world's treasury of art.

"And the war's effect on literature and art must be retrogressive. In general, the artists of France were intellectual before the war. After the war the artists of France will be emotional, sentimental. It will take a long time for art in France to regain its old healthy condition.

"And so," said Madame, with sudden fervor, "it is America's turn! America must now do the work of France, New York must do the work of Paris.

"But when I think of America—mon Dieu! America has never done anything at all! America has produced nothing, has utterly failed to contribute to the beauty of the world. America has never provided a place for her artists—she has forced them all to go to France. She has never done anything to attract the elite of the world; she has never provided anything new and beautiful to attract them."

"Madame does not like," said M. du Mas, "the way in which the American millionaires copy the things of Europe."

"No," said Madame, with a forceful gesture. "The American millionaires annoy me by their worship of tradition. They never seek to develop new art with their money, but always to acquire and to copy the old art. They spend their

to give him something new and American—to follow the bent of their own natural genius. Instead, he says to them, 'Here is a picture of some Greek building, or some Renaissance building. Copy it exactly!' And, of course, by this means American art cannot develop."

"Fifth Avenue," said Mme. de Saint-Point, in tones of solemn conviction, "is ridiculous! The only beautiful things I have seen in New York are the Woolworth, Singer, and Flatiron Buildings, and the group of municipal buildings. They are original expressions of American art; they are not imitations of Europe.

"The trouble is, as I said, that Americans worship tradition more than Europeans ever did. The effort seems always to be to import and imitate traditions. I hear that some millionaire has bought Madison Square Garden and intends to turn it into an academy of the Greek dance. That's it! Toujours la Grecque! His money is not to go to develop the art of the dance, but to imitate the dancing of bygone centuries!

"But now America must take the place of France. And I think New York can easily become what Paris used to be. Think of all the money that America has made out of the war! Think of the fortunes that have been made in munitions! How are they to be spent? In filling America with the relics of civilizations that are dead? No! That cannot be! That money must be used for new galleries, new theatres, new institutions of every sort that will help to develop art!"

"But just how is New York to become the new Paris?" asked the reporter. "Is this money to be used to support the artists?"

"The support of the artists," said Madame warmly, "is to be taken for granted! That is a matter of secondary importance. The important thing is for the money to be used in making New York a real artistic centre, in filling it with theatres and galleries that will attract the artists and aid in the development of art. Every city in which there is money becomes a magnet to attract ideas. And ideas are what New York needs.

"I find America in a state of absolute chaos. Every one lives for himself. There are no ideals, there are no ideas! In art the only plan is to copy the art of other nations. Even in mechanics this is true; I see that, for example, the automobiles in the street are in form copies of French and English models. New ideas must be developed, and for their development money is necessary. The war has given America the money, and the war has taken from the artists of the world their home in Paris. Ten centuries ago Paris began creating traditions. Now let America begin to create traditions, now let New York begin!

"My impression of New York is that of enormous energy going to waste. That energy must not be wasted! New York must become a true cosmopolitan city, the natural home of the artists of the world, and it must do this by developing its own individuality. This imitative period through which New York is going is a phase of its childishness. As a child imitates grown people, so New York imitates the capitals of Europe. But now New York's childhood should come to an end; it is time for New York to develop its own individuality and to cease to imitate."

Mme. de Saint-Point thinks of Metachory as a new tradition, and she thinks of New York—the new Paris—as an appropriate place for its development. Europe, she believes, has already enough traditions, and in Europe at present no new artistic and literary theories can receive a hearing.

"I can see New York," she said, "becoming the artistic centre and influence that Baireuth was in Wagner's lifetime. I come here dreaming—and not only dreaming, but planning—a great institution in New York which shall be a centre of dramatic and pictorial and literary art. A world style might be developed from such a centre. This institution must not be controlled by the Government nor by any wealthy man or group of men—that would kill it! It must be free to express the spirit of art."

Mme. de Saint-Point's vision is tremendous in its scope, and she speaks with impressive enthusiasm. This great institution of which she speaks seems to be already in her mind a reality, and New York to be even as she talks becoming the artistic centre of the world.

"The American millionaires," she said, "waste their money and their time because they have no ideas. The American artists have ideas, but they are neglected here—they get no attention at all. So they go to Paris, and America loses the much-needed power of their genius. In the world there are two forces—the force of finance and the force of the intellect. For the development of art these two forces must work together. And when these two forces work together, then will America become the leader of the world's art, then will New York become the new Paris."