

HOW TO SING A SONG. By YVETTE GUILBERT. The Macmillan Co.

IT is commonplace that Yvette Guilbert is the greatest artist of her period. It is a tragedy that her art happens to be ephemeral. The poignancy of such a realization is like that which one feels in the eternal Greek which Synge reawakened in the wild Western world. I am thinking of *Riders to the Sea*. Experience dulls us; words are prostituted in the brothel of life. In *Riders to the Sea*, Synge says merely, "A man was drowned."

His genius sweeps away the cobwebs which time spins over the door of the cavern of our imagination. We realize the meaning of those words, "A man was drowned."

This power to make us feel is the divine thing in art. It is the creative force which answers "Yea" to the prophet's cynical, "Lord, shall these dead bones live?" Now this is exactly what Yvette Guilbert has done for song. She has not done it for one century only. She has made all time speak, give up its secret, to those who are capable to live in that divine air of the spirit which magazines, cocktails, and automobiles so easily pollute.

I see in Yvette Guilbert not only an artist in the ordinary sense of the word, but an artist like Blake. Her preface on Time might have come from a Book of Ecclesiastes written by Solomon in the period before that in which he could not do it any more. Vanity of vanities? Contemptuously Yvette Guilbert replies, "Does life ever stop?"

I am not a singer. The technique of music is to me a mournful mystery. Yet in reading this book I find a thousand splendid counsels valid for all art. This book is more than "How to sing a song." It is a philosophical treatise on How to do anything. The arts are one. There is nothing but creation. As it is written, Love is the law, love under will. It is apprehension of this fact that makes artistry of any sort possible. It explains why there are no

artists in America, or at least the most we can say is, "Finger of birth-strangled babe, Ditch-delivered by a drab," the only decent ingredient in the cauldron of bourgeoisie gone mad.

It is impossible to go into details with regard to this book. In every page Yvette Guilbert unconsciously reveals her unique greatness. Her brain is great enough to comprehend the minutiae of technique without in the smallest degree forgetting the fact that technique is absolutely worthless without genius. America is full of technicians, and I suspect that a number of geniuses are born. But the genius is strangled before he can acquire technique, and the technician unfortunately is not strangled at all. But any one who wants to do something worth doing and go to prison, should sleep with this book under his pillow, if he has a pillow.

ALEISTER CROWLEY.