

Eccentrics. So far I know of nothing in the series which throws doubt on the assumption that an eccentric is a harmless grotesque, addicted to unusual clothes and dwelling-places or an undue solicitude for the spiritual welfare of pet pigs; one who moves us to mirth as well as pity. Now Lawrence was not one of these. It is true that he wore Arab clothes when attending the Conference of Versailles, but this was no more than a dramatic and none-too-successful gesture. He had none of the calm, bland, surrealist sanity, the rational explanation of Carrollian fantasy, which characterises the true eccentric and was portrayed for all time in Lear's limericks. His later oddities, the change of name, the insistence on anonymity, self-burial in the life of a private soldier, the acute embarrassment that this inflicted on the other private soldiers, who knew not what to make of him—none of these things fall to the least extent within the definition of eccentric which we accept and which the rest of this series takes for granted. They were the product of some extraordinary mental and spiritual torment which nobody has yet begun to explain, something quite outside the normal range of experience which descended on one of the most arresting figures of the 20th Century and turned the whole course of his experience outside the channels of accepted reality.

Technicolour

IT is not surprising, I feel, that 2YA's Sunday afternoon programme *A Splash of Colour—Scenes from the Lives of Great Artists* should present a highly-coloured account of the lives of the artists in question. The introduction to the series, wherein is announced the aim of exploring "that fascinating human problem, the man who wields the brush," states categorically that "more colourful than the pictures are the artists who painted them." This, in the case of the programme about Rubens, I categorically deny. His life-story, even when made up for the mike, has not the glowing splendour of his canvases, though none would deny it a certain sombre richness. Now Gauguin and Hogarth were much better material for this Roman holiday, the former's life story having the advantage of some previous touching-up by Somerset Maugham and George Sanders, and the latter's being full of scenes necessitating speeches such as "Unhand my daughter, sir." Compared with these two, Rubens, with two successful marriages and an uneventfully brilliant career behind him, is at a disadvantage. Let us hope he is duly grateful.

Two Plays

TWO radio plays of completely contrasting types, both NZBS productions, were presented by Wellington stations on a recent Wednesday, the first *The Man Who Could Make Nightmares*, a creepy little offering that almost made you wish he couldn't, and the second *Mr. Broderick Returns*, a simple little comedy, and refreshingly terrestrial, in spite of the fact that to the experienced filmgoer the title would suggest something on the lines of Mr. Jordan. The former was more obviously good radio in the sense that a film is good cinema—it made use of the potentialities of its particular medium. It took a fantastic

concept and plugged it till the concept ceased to be fantastic. It built up an atmosphere and sustained it. It provided a climax that was artistically satisfactory and poetically just. Yet when the announcer's voice rang down the curtain and normalcy was resumed, nothing of the play was carried over. *Mr. Broderick Returns* had no particular technical merit and no startlingly originality of plot or treatment, but Miss Janisch had managed to infuse into it a certain warmth, and the fact that its motif, instead of being far-fetched, was more or less just over the back fence waiting to be picked up meant that it could be immediately assimilated into our emotional make-up.

Angel and Enchantress

ARDENT feminists are bound to feel a little bitter at the fact that talks on the status of women still have news value. No lecturer would be likely to consider that a series of talks on *The Position of Men as Reflected in Literature* would be likely to draw the Saturday morning audience (the thought of its Big Sisterlike longevity would perhaps be a deterrent), even though nowadays that audience is composed equally of spear and distaff sides. But, bitterness apart, I found Mrs. Mountjoy's first talk in her series informative, entertaining, and for a radio talk, original. She has begun the spinning of the two threads which are said to alternate in man's reactions to woman—the thought of her as devil and enchantress, the spellbinder who weakens man against his will, and the conception of her as angel, symbol of bounty and increase, yet pedestalled in her immunity from fleshly desires—threads not to be woven together till comparatively modern times, when woman is discovered to be merely a human being. Mrs. Mountjoy concluded her talk with a quotation from *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, a passage listing the attributes of the goddess Isis, "the type and symbol of all that is best in women," and listening to it I felt there was much to be said for belonging to a sex whose position in literature could be revealed only in terms of the immortal.

Tyger Transmogrified

THE element of surprise was certainly not lacking in the performance over 2YA by Linette Grayson of *The Tiger Song* by Wolstenholme. Behind this curious title lurked no nursery tiger nor jazz-band rag beastie, but William Blake's one and only *Tyger, Tyger*. It was surely the most staggering instance of ill-found music for words any studio performer has unearthed for us. Amy Woodforde-Finden (whose style is aped in this composition) could not have achieved anything further from the spirit of Blake's poem. It had waverings on the half tone, in the true and original *Indian Love Lyric* manner, on the words "of the night" followed by "plink, plonk" on the piano to suggest the stalking paws of a most amiable, Disneyish animal. And then, because the composer couldn't fit two of the syllables into his tune, which he valued more than Blake's poem, the word "fearful" was left out of the line "could frame thy fearful symmetry?" All this, and then (again à la *Love Lyric*) a refrain after each verse: "Tiger! Tiger! Tiger! Ti-ger! The composer of this fantastic monstrosity is presumably the organist composer of 'The Question and the Answer.' With Blake, one wonders, 'Did he smile his work to see?'"

A little Vain?

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