

Schweitzer develops in careful detail his own method of playing Bach, his main suggestion being that a retreat from modernisation is long overdue, and that performers should endeavour to make Bach's works sound as Bach himself would have wished. Among some startling experiments in this direction, Schweitzer recommends the use of the clavier instead of the modern grand piano, the substitution of the old curved bow in the great chaconne for solo violin, and the resurrection of many ancient instruments, including the flute à bec, the viol da gamba, and something called a Quartgeige. The main purpose of introducing Bach-lovers to this antique research is not so much to supersede modern instruments by older ones, as to make the performer really understand the inner nature of Bach's works by hearing them as originally intended; such knowledge can then be applied to the interpretation of Bach on modern instruments with considerable gain. Now is the time for someone to protest about the prevalence, in our radio Bach programmes, of transcriptions and arrangements. The time has come, surely, when we can take our Bach "straight." It should not be possible to find in the programmes a work by "Luther-Bach-Stokowski"—a musical sandwich in which the bread is cut far too thickly!

Beloved Liar

WHOEVER thought of putting Baron Munchausen into the *Passing Parade* was responsible for enlivening this programme with a dash of incredible frivolity. However much we may lift our eyebrows, nowadays, at the naïveté of readers who took the book seriously on its first appearance, we must admit that *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* has in its sheer exuberant exaggeration a touch of undoubted genius. Its author seems to have been a charlatan comparable to Cagliostro, and in some remarkable way evidently foisted his spurious scientific claims for a time on an unsuspecting public. In this episode of *Passing Parade* we had the story of the Baron's adventures in the belly of the whale, his trip to the moon, and of course the tale of the miraculous snowstorm which melted in a night, leaving the baron's horse tethered to the church spire, which he had mistaken for a hitching-post. It occurred to me, while listening to this programme, that a series of wonderful episodes could be made (although not suited to this programme) by readings of those modern tales-of-the-long-bow, *The Travel Tales of Mr. Joseph Jorkens*, by Lord Dunsany.

Studio Recital

IT is not, I think, the first time that Christchurch has heard the Ashburton Vocal Study Group; at any rate it is to be hoped that we shall hear more of them in the future. There is something about local studio presentations that demands a special sort of attitude from the listener. This must be either because of a genuine, if slightly sceptical, interest in local talent—so that one is mildly surprised when something good turns up—or perhaps because of a sneaking hope that something may go wrong in the middle, which would somehow be sublimely funny (nothing ever goes wrong with recordings except the announcer). In this way I suppose the studio recital is the direct descendant of the village concert. One is prepared to be just as critical and just as appreciative. The Ashburton Ladies gave a very pleasing performance, well-balanced, with good tone, and only slightly marred by occasional raggedness. One number in particular seemed to me outstanding both

in choice and presentation — Geibel's "Plantation Song"; but even the well-worn old favourites had a certain amount of freshness. The least successful numbers, perhaps not surprisingly, were those involving legato singing — Schubert's "Cradle Song" and Handel's Largo. These songs were probably least suited to the ability of the choir. The Strauss waltz, on the other hand, with which they finished, was admirably chosen, and rather floored my earlier impression that the choir would do themselves more justice if they selected less well-known songs.

String of Pearls

ALTHOUGH listed in the programme as an NZBS recorded play, "String of Pearls" from 3ZB was really a short story, read—and well read—by a single voice. As the story had at least eight important characters this was infinitely better than attempting to dramatize it; the different characters were well brought out in the reading and the interest well sustained. The chief impression gained, however, was that the story just wasn't worth it. A certain measure of probability is necessary even for this type of story; and it seems hardly credible that a thief cunning enough to steal a valuable string of pearls from a mansion positively bristling with burglar-alarms should cast them nonchalantly into the gutter at the first suggestion that they were fakes. But Cadger does just that. Perhaps it is the improbability of it all that makes the climax appear so weak. No doubt the only thing left for the poor rogue to do when he found out his mistake was to swear long and loudly; but somehow it seemed a little inadequate.

Unsolved Mystery

HAVING had for some time a vague and quite unfounded notion that *History's Unsolved Mysteries* from 3ZB meant William and Mary and Who-killed-the-Red-King, I was more than pleasantly surprised to find that "The Ship from Nowhere" was a rattling good mystery story which had nothing whatsoever to do with the text-books. It had facts and dates, certainly; good, solid, convincing ones. On April 6, 1901, the yacht *Commodore*, without a soul aboard her, sailed herself into New York Harbour; and no-one was found who had ever heard of her. Unlike those of the usual fictional mystery, subsequent events here—the finding of a cryptic message-in-a-tin was one—only make the whole thing more baffling. More questions are asked, and no-one answers them: why did she claim Philadelphia registration? Where had she been? Was the message a fake, and incidentally, would paper only 40 years old, and sealed in a tin, crumble to pieces in one's hands? Fact or fiction the story would have been a good one; and best of all, it was one that can be classed as a "real mystery," since it still remains unsolved.

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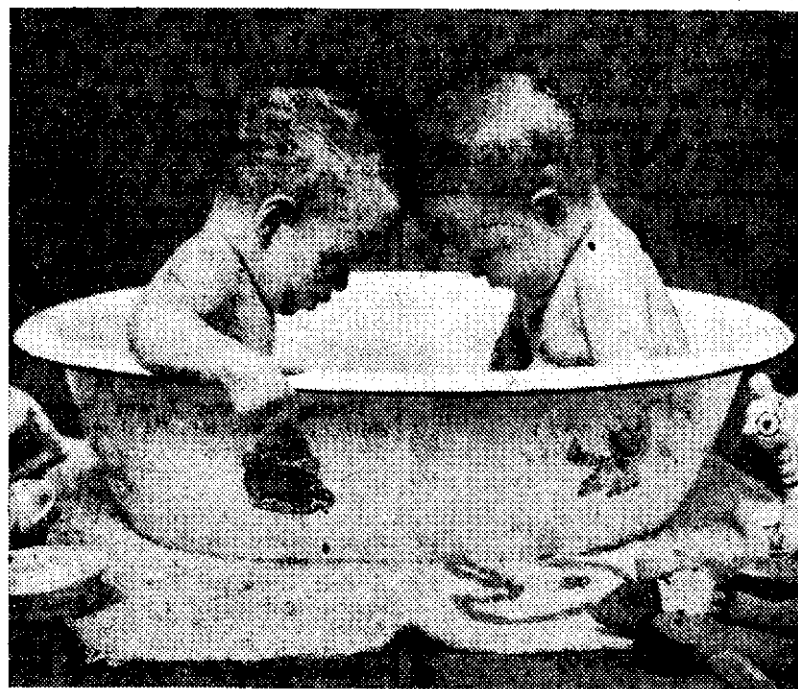
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