

RETURN JOURNEY

WELLINGTON again slaps the face with wind
So well remembered; and now the mind
Leaps; all sea, all tossed hills, all white-
Edged air poured in tides over the tight
Town. Bleached bones of houses are hard
To distinguish, at some distance, from a graveyard.

BUT do not consider death; we have tucked
Too snugly into the valleys; we have mucked
With the rake of time over the tamed
Foreshore. Battering trams; Lambton, lamed
With concrete, has only a hint of ghost waters
On the Quay stranded among elevators.

THERE is no need to remember swamp-grass,
Or how the first women (let the rain pass,
They had prayed) wept when the hills reared up
Through the mist, and they were trapped
Between sea and cliffed forest. No ship could be
More prisoning than the grey beach at Petone.

NO need to consider (here where we have shut
The tiger tight behind iron and concrete)
How we might yet drown deep under the wind;
And the wind die too; and an insect find
(Columbus of his day) the little graveyard town
Set in a still landscape like porcelain.

—Paul Henderson

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listen to three offerings with a domestic bias, when I would prefer to escape into a Grace Gibson world where For Love of a Woman the husband does the weekly wash on Saturday, and on Tuesdays I have found that Mr. Harper's knowledgeable New Zealand Bird talks make a heavy second course to the solid goodness of Norma Cooper's *Pioneer Women*. However, now that Monday is partly devoted to Mrs. E. S. Fry's skittish *London to New Zealand* talks and Tuesday to Sybil Lee's gently personal *Life Among the Maoris* the session is not too weighted with listener-improvement. But it is Wednesday, I imagine, that appeals most strongly to listeners. The Panel shows an extraordinary versatility in dealing with listeners' questions on topics ranging from child behaviour to modern art, and if their dissertations show less than Brains Trust spontaneity at all events they never ever send the earnest seeker after guidance unsatisfied away.

Passive Listening

IN *Arts Digest* from 4YA, Mary Martin gave good advice to audiences (concert and radio) in "The Empty Bucket Audience Theory." Miss Martin, a shrewd, broadminded, and well-informed critic, packed her talk with pointed observations addressed to listeners rather than to performers, and especially to those of us who like to think that we listen with discrimination. I felt that what she had to say about the dangers of passive listening was even more applicable to the radio audience than to the concert-going public. In the concert hall it is to be presumed that most of the seats are occupied by those who have come with the idea of listening carefully and learning something; but the radio audience, more often than not, listens merely because the radio happens to be switched on, and listens, moreover, through a screen of counter-attractions such as reading, darning, or homework. Unfortunately, Miss Martin's talk on the fine art of selective listening, with her special plea for open-minded toleration and careful evaluation of new music, would in all probability reach only a small section of listeners, coming as it did in the middle of the afternoon. I feel that *Arts*

Digest is too good for this "tea-time" position in the programmes, and that it well might be lifted bodily out of its time-table and placed in a more advantageous position in the evening programmes.

Sure Touch

STANDING out from the series of weekly and bi-weekly radio plays was *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*. Barrie's lightly sentimental touch, which has caused the word "whimsical" to cling to his reputation like a burr, is a fragile thing when it comes to the medium of the radio. What may seem delicately quaint in the theatre or between the pages of a book often comes over the radio as just so much banality. But this particular play is saved from the obvious sentimental morass in which it might have floundered by the sure dramatic touch which made Barrie choose a couple of Scots as his hero and heroine (if I may so designate the kiltie and the old charwoman). There was something about the portrayal of these two which made them completely real to at least one listener, and made the pathetic little story of their meeting and parting a romance in the best sense of that sadly overworked word. This entirely successful version of the Barrie play was "made in Scotland" by the BBC; listeners who may encounter it in later programmes had better prepare themselves with a couple of handkerchiefs.

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