

Grey Days and Blue Days

THAT Monday, the first of the flu days, had no colour at all; no colour, no smell, no sound, no taste, nothing; a lost, waste, desert day quite unlike that regret-engendering Monday snatched between an equatorial Sunday and Tuesday. It may have been Tuesday, more likely Wednesday, before I began to see that the Monday had been nothing; not even, strictly speaking, sleep. Tuesday began to be oranges, lemons, heat and cold and huge piles of tissue paper handkerchiefs. But not Monday: if I were forced, I suppose, I could think up a word between *thick* and *muffled* to describe Monday, my Monday — because it belonged to no one else, not even, that particular Monday, to anyone else in the first day of flu.

Tuesday, beginning in a blurred shade of purple-grey, began very soon to have large spready blobs of tangerine smudging, fading, smudging, fading on the swimmy surface; pity about the carpenters up above, B. explained. So hammers were tangerine; or at least left tangerine smudges behind them, though not for long. No. The blurred shade of purple-grey remained, swimming steadily. Ouch, no not steadily. Someone was sharpening a pencil and the graphite specks were flying in colours of veridian green and brightest cyclamen: and it's so *quick*, yes, you can put it on in two two's, yes, really wonderful stuff and so easy—NOT a pencil sharpener, B. turning on for the time and getting Aunt Daisy. Impossible, quite quite impossible, that Aunt Daisy has ever had flu.

SO I must have begun to think in words again on Tuesday. Or did I decide about Aunt Daisy later, perhaps much much later when I felt almost strong again? Though not as strong as Aunt Daisy. Tuesday became, later, quite a number of sleeps; and later still, when B. came home in time for the 6 o'clock news at 6.30, Tuesday took on a variety of warm and gentle ground colours threaded irregularly with strong primaries as the news announcers read their incoherencies and I murmured yes to B.'s comprehending comments and a small piece of very thin toast in reply to the 7 o'clock question. The toast was very thin, faintly curved, delicious colour of Phar Lap without the gleam. First bread since head-splitting Sunday, Tuesday's thin toast, pale gold under the reading lamp, was only less perfect than the section of orange, torn without juice lost, membrane peeled. The room warm bright waves of light from the reading lamp, the beginning of Tuesday night, the new *Listener* to see, the news to hear, everyone down with flu, so-and-so and someone else. What is to-morrow? To-morrow is Wednesday. Then I shall get up and catch up with some work. You will stay in bed. No, I shall get up but I shall stay indoors; I shall write all the letters I should have written

last week and the week before that and the week before that. You are talking too much; you'll be coughing again.

AND I was; but that was hours and hours later, in the small-hours darkness of Wednesday. But the darkness is not without colour, especially Wednesday's darkness, the third day of flu. I must have been at least 80 per cent. conscious, failing to go to sleep, trying not to waste the time by prewriting Wednesday's letters (Wednesday proper, that is). There was one moment, I remember, of a beautiful bright and shining celandine yellow when I thought of a most superior pun; the thing couldn't become a pun till one half of it was translated into French, and even then the pun didn't work till the French was re-translated. The whole thing has become so complicated in my mind now, that I have no idea if it was really a worthy pun or only a pigment of my imagination. The details faded quickly,

but the pleasure of the pun remained and Wednesday retained its brightness, yellows predominating; it was the day I began to get better, prowling round the house dusting things that had been undisturbed for weeks and actually writing two of the planned 17 letters. The other 15 still remain to be written.

AFTER that, naturally, Thursday had to wear a pale, even a wan look; I was up, about, all the long day; though Thursday began with a pink-greenness to match the exquisite sycamore buds reaching towards the window, it sank about lunch time to a weary fawn. It didn't pick up till at least 8 o'clock at night when I went thankfully to bed again, laden with more letter-writing materials, some darning, and *Orlando*. I wrote no letters, darned no socks, but re-read *Orlando*, went to deep sleep and woke to a sun-filled Friday as blue as Wellington harbour on the rarest, gentlest, clearest day of the year.

Cerulean Friday, up and about, out and about, moving slowly but breathing again and finding for welcome the first three crocuses under the japonica. And so to normal rose-pink Saturday, soft dove-grey Sunday and Monday — no. Monday has no colour yet; next week perhaps, but this week it is the anniversary of the first day of flu, a lost, waste, desert day to be forgotten and despised.

—J.

Biblical Songs

THE deep religious feeling of Dvorak is well brought out in the *Biblical Songs* he composed in the year 1894-95. during the time that he was in New York as head of the National Conservatory. However, he chose the texts from the Czech translation of the Bible, and many critics agree that he succeeded in expressing in this music "a profound spirituality." Listeners to 1YA will hear Dvorak's *Biblical Songs* in two Sunday recitals by Lyndall Greager, at 3.0 p.m. on September 4 and 11.

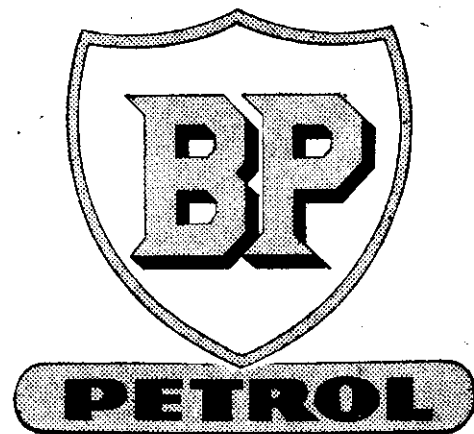
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