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Radio Review

ENERGETIC INVALIDS

CECIL WOODHAM-SMITH'S BBC talk, *They Stayed in Bed*, was a surprising choice for 8.45 on a Sunday evening, but a brilliant one. Mrs. Woodham-Smith recalled the fruitful invalidity of several eminent Victorians. Florence Nightingale, she reminded us, stayed in bed for more than fifty years, and got through a staggering amount of work there. Charles Darwin stayed on his sofa nearly all his life, tended by his wife, of whom it was said that the perfect nurse had married the perfect patient; he worked only two hours a day, never went to meetings, saw only the people he wanted to see. She also recalled Elizabeth Barrett in her ivy-darkened, dusty, spider-webbed bedroom, and Harriet Martineau, who stayed in bed for six years until she was cured by

mesmerism. It was the only way, Mrs. Woodham-Smith said, that they could find the solitude they needed. If this implies a conscious choice it is no doubt an over-simplification, but the unconscious motive was probably as she said, and it worked. It would not work today. Psychosomatic medicine would see through their fainting fits, dizzy spells and sinking feelings. Perhaps we are short of a few Florence Nightingales and Charles Darwins because of it.

O Distraction!

IT'S odd how disconcerting a peculiarity of pronunciation on the air may prove. I am sorry to say that I have been quite unable to follow intelligently Professor Rutherford's talks, *Episodes in the Life of Sir George Grey*, solely because he chooses to pronounce the word "governor" as if the first "o" had the same sound as it has in "sovereign." The pronunciation would be of little importance if the word were used only once or twice during a talk, but since the talks are about a governor it recurs continually, together with "govern," "governing" and "government," all treated in the same strange way. The cumulative effect is quite unerving. The speaker has other peculiarities, too: he insists, for example, on giving full value to each of the vowels, "ia," in the middle of the word "parliament." I have heard enough to gather that there is very good material in these talks, and I hope some day to read the biography of Grey which Professor Rutherford is writing, and of which the talks are a by-product. But I cannot listen to him.

—R.D.McE.

Brave New World

ONE of the least successful recordings that Stan Freberg, that acute satirist of "pops" fashions, has made is his

RENEWAL

WHEN from the dark, Persephone
Comes forth to find the waiting tree
Tortured by frost and scourged with rain
Willing to bear its leaves again;
The snowdrop and the aconite
Crushed through the month-long bitter night
Rising undaunted to unbend
The votive blossoms of their kind—
Can she alone, that morning hour,
Be less than leaf, be less than flower,
And harbouring winter's insolence
Deny the young spring's innocence?
Or, faltering with a new-found grace,
Accept the sunlight on her face,
And, stepping outward from despair
Set leaves and flowers in her hair?

—Eileen L. Soper

parody of Elvis ("The Pelvis") Presley's *Heartbreak Hotel*. For, when the original itself is so outrageously funny, surely any attempt at burlesque must be a work of supererogation. But doubt creeps in. Presley's recording has been on the Auckland Hit Parade for some time. And certainly only a few of the teen-age record-buyers must have invested in the disc because of its unconscious humour. The rest must be taking seriously an offering by this galvanic ex-truck driver, in which a series of incoherent sounds, rather like Zulu speech heard through three thicknesses of woollen blanket, is punctuated with rhythmic groans, out of which I have been able to decipher only the word "lonely." I am sure it is not advancing years which make me feel that those who support the Presley style by buying his records are viciously anti-social. The perfect comment on the phenomenon came from Doug. Laurensen on 1YD last week, when, after playing *Heartbreak Hotel*, he remarked laconically, in a tone of wry resignation, "O brave new world that has such people in it!"

Out of the Past

THE GOLDEN AGE OF OPERA, one of the most popular of 1YC's programmes, came to an end last week
(continued on next page)

The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

FROM time to time we hear a broadcast programme designed primarily for the entertainment or edification of children; but which is successful or valuable enough to warrant its re-broadcasting at a later date and a later hour for the more worldly-wise and jaded ears of other children up to the eighth decade. Such a one is the series of programmes (NZBS) expounding the nature of orchestral instruments, given by James Robertson; in his usual bright manner he chats informally about the instruments, and interlards his words with anecdotes, explanations by the players themselves, and profuse and apt musical illustrations. By taking the instruments two at a time, he is able to sum up each session with a duet that shows off most of the capabilities of the players in a graphic manner. He obviously enjoys doing this work, and his enthusiasm is infectious enough to make up for the fact that the series was originally for a juvenile audience. The players do not sound quite as happy about it, but their chief work being illustrative, this doesn't matter so much. I've no doubt that many children stay around to hear these programmes again; and their parents may well gain something, too.

The Robert Masters Quartet continues to delight us (YC links) with its sensitive playing of familiar and more obscure works. They seem to be able to vary the tone of their ensemble to suit the work in hand, no mean feat for a chamber group; for instance, the G Minor Quartet of Brahms breathed warmly its rather sultry moods, while Fauré's second Quartet seemed altogether lighter in treatment as well as in texture, though the era and emotional content of the two works are not strikingly different. I was surprised, by the way, at the similarity of the two Fauré Quartets as played by this group, especially considering the time lapse between their dates of origin.

Maurice Clare and Janetta McStay (NZBS) are still being heard in their series of violin and piano recitals. One I heard recently contained a very pleasant Sonata by Respighi, with all the colour of his 20th century lyricism. The sweep of the melody here was irresistible, and the violin tone itself particularly lovely; in fact, just the sort of tone that the sonata must have been written for. The accompaniments of Miss McStay are almost ideal, clear but not obtrusive, and always artistic. The result is a composition and not, as so often, a competition.



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