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WELLINGTON

RADIO REVIEW

The Old Lion

I WAS not prepared to be so moved by the programme "I Can See It Now," edited by Edward R. Murrow from Sir Winston Churchill's many broadcasts, but as the programme rolled on, from the dire warnings in the wilderness before the war, to the assumption of supreme office in 1940, the war, the peace, the wilderness again, and more dire warnings, I surrendered once more to the enormous hypnosis of this undeniably great man. His reputation is being sniped at these days by little men and some big ones; none of them can dim the glory of his wartime speeches, authentic voice of a whole people, imprisoning in their lefty cadences a nation's consciousness of itself, nor make ridiculous this old knight mounted on his charger, storming into the lists, at his helm the favour of his sovereign lady, England. Sir Winston, as an orator, shows us history as a sort of medieval bestiary, ludicrous perhaps, to scholars, but just, in its simple grandeur of conception, what a fighting people needed. The lion and her cubs (Britain and the Commonwealth) stand menaced by the treacherous tiger and jackal (Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy), but the lion will conquer, "the stars in their courses proclaim the deliverance." He speaks with a gruff resonance entirely appropriate to the mood of embattled heroism which only he, in modern times, has been able to strike with full conviction. The relish of his indictment of the "Nazi villains," the vigour of his fighting French ("Francais!

C'est Churchill qui vous parle!") and the Elizabethan rotundity of his cadenced prose, almost Shakespearean in its slow assemblage of weighty rhetoric, are, recorded, a superb monument to an unshakeable will and a dauntless spirit.

—B.E.G.M.

Rich and Strange

WE'VE heard most famous people by now, so the pleasure of satisfying a vulgar curiosity about their voices is granted to us less and less often. To me, therefore, the happiest thing about the BBC *Young People's Forum on Books* (Sunday National Programme) was the extraordinary quack-quack sound made by Lord David Cecil. Do all Cecil talk like this, I wonder? Has the Cecil voice been as carefully preserved through the centuries as the Cecil face? I can't recall hearing Lord Salisbury, but in any case, his political career might require the sacrifice of something so rich and strange. (*Incidental intelligence*: the announcer did not call it Cecil.) Marghanita Laski's didactic manner was another surprise. Rupert Hart-Davis's voice was gruff and open-air; Ivor Brown and Robert Henriques sounded ordinary; Lady Violet Bonham-Carter sounded like Lady Violet Bonham-Carter. They all discussed the young people's questions with spirit and humour and sound sense. Miss Laski was right enough: textbooks ought not to be more attractive, in the sense of easier; but to make them more attractive to look at would not demoralise students, surely? Lord David's modesty forbade him to say the obvious thing, that one reason biography often outshines the novel these days is that biography these days is often so well written. Lady Violet had to say it for him. It was all quite delightful.

Life in the Churches

RELIGION is still an activity of a good many New Zealanders, and it is only right that the NZBS should give us some news of their doings. Few church people, even, know much of what goes on in other denominations. If I have not so far gained much im-

pression of abounding Christian life from the monthly magazine, *Faith and Works*, it is mostly that there is so little of the programme that no composite picture has yet emerged. It will in time, probably, and it's advisable to start a new venture modestly. Meanwhile, more vigour is shown in this year's *Christian Question-Box*. The speakers abate none of the charity and large agreement shown by their predecessors last year, but they are far more forthright and even argumentative. Argument, besides being fun to listen to, is at least a sign of life—even though we can be grateful that the volcanic element in church history, referred to by the Rev. W. P. Temple when he commented in *Faith and Works* on the proposal to have Bishops in Scotland, erupts less fatally than of old.

—R.D.McE.

Depression Echoes

TO my mind, *Love on the Dole*, that memorable play of the Depression, was given a really stirring production by the NZBS on *Sunday Showcase*. I have rarely heard the Wellington players in such thoroughly good form, all acting with a vigour and a sincerity which overcame the handicap of the fact that the play has inevitably dated. The accents of Hanky Park, too, sounded authentic, although Dorothy Campbell, as Sally Hardcastle, who chooses a fate worse than death rather than poverty, allowed her natural voice to break through quite often. Nora Slaney, as her most distressful mother, and Roy Leywood, as her work-desperate father, stood out for poignant acting. Even the mob scenes had a depth and stereophonic quality that made me forget, as I seldom do, that they were sound effects. The revival of a play like this has a significance that goes beyond its genuine dramatic appeal, in reminding a new generation of grim days within their parents' memory. When it was over, my eldest said, "Terribly exaggerated, wasn't it?" I am sure that there were many listeners who could have reassured him that the play was truth itself.

The Week's Music . . . by SEBASTIAN

NEW ZEALAND composers have been much in the musical news lately, with their cumulative bid for recognition; but very few of us, when we come to think of it, have ever heard much music by them, with one or two notable exceptions. It is not that they are disapproved of by authority, but the gap between score and performance is all too often an unsurmountable one, involving a plethora of negotiations which would dishearten even a Pangloss among composers.

A small step forward was heard (YC link) in the National Orchestra's performance of Thomas Gray's "Overture for a Festive Occasion"; this is not a new work, dating as it does from 1939, but is apparently worth reviving. Festive it certainly is, with great variety in orchestral colour and rhythm, and an aura of high spirits reminiscent of some of Malcolm Arnold's work; but it would not be a piece to hear every day, just as too much rich food is indigestible. The Orchestra did justice to its instrumental complexities without trying to invest it with subtle shades of feeling; and this I think was the right approach to it. I don't mean that it was all froth, but its atmosphere was the most important feature.

In the same programme James Hopkinson played Nielsen's attractive Flute Concerto with his usual virtuosity; a little-known work this, appealing more to the expert flautist than the average listener, it is still full of event, with a charming idiom which though modern and individual is fairly conventional—a feature of much of this composer's work. There was also Schubert's fourth Symphony, which I can't recall having heard from the Orchestra previously, but which obviously suits them well. Certain of the wind players may have had regrets about their solo passages,* but the essential contrasts of mood and tone were eloquently handled, and the whole was effectively balanced on the razor-edge of orchestral technique.

I think I've heard all of Stanley Jackson's series (NZBS) of pre-Bach organ music now, and have enjoyed most of them, partly for their surprises and partly for the quiet but clear registrations, which made the thunder of the average concert organist sound superfluous. Brilliance squeezed forth is frequently taken as proof of the performer's musicianship. Now all we need is a series of post-Bach music on the same principles, and the millennium will have arrived.

(*See panel, page 6.—Ed.)

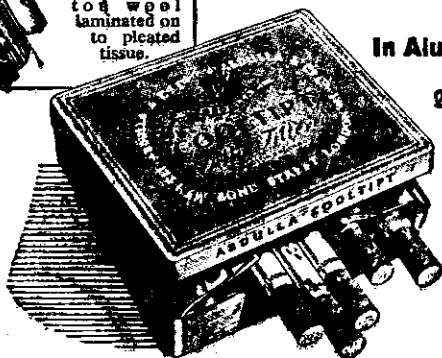
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