



to say much about the music, which seemed to progress as an endless *parlando*, fitfully relieved by a folksy Czech tune, or a passage of Schubertian harmony. For me, the work said nothing: was nothing. I shall not run a mile to hear it again.

Grande Dame

I HEARD by chance last week the opening scenes of Act III of *The Way of the World*, with Dame Edith Evans as Lady Wishfort. Dame Edith was, in her youth, the Millament of her time; there can surely be no doubt, that in her maturity, she is the Lady Wishfort of all time. Her voice in this role is like a flawed wind instrument of enormous width of timbre, a slaying flaying instrument for all those unfortunates called upon to serve her. This, for example, to Peg, who has brought her a tiny cup from which to drink cherry brandy. "What a cup hast thou brought! Dost thou take me for a fairy to drink out of an acorn? Why dost thou not bring a thimble?" Dame Edith turns Lady Wishfort into a virtuoso harridan, queen of invective, mistress of an irritability so enormous that it seems enlarged to carry the whole world of ill-humour, yet withal, wildly funny and engaging. One's only fear is that her identity with this part will be so complete, the lines along which she has laid it down so decisive and authoritative, that, as with her Lady Bracknell, no other actress will ever be able to play her.

B.E.G.M.

Starting Hares

I DON'T think I've heard a discussion that started so many hares as the final one in the *Liberty and Licence* group. It was not only the most ani-

EARTHWARD

LET there be nowhere else,
And, light, stand still.
This is my time and place—
This hour, this hill.

My spirit here
Sinks to rest
As the lark
To its nest.

Or as the swift
Plumb-line of rain
Falling to earth to be
Of earth again.

Certain as rain
And lark I come
From the height and the cold
Home.

—Bennie Thomson

(C) Punch

mated of the three I heard, but it suggested innumerable possibilities for future discussions. I'd certainly like to hear arguments on, to take some of the statements made, Do New Zealand writers suffer as much as they think they do? And is it impossible to be a healthy Bohemian in New Zealand? Eileen Saunders and P. Martin-Smith stood out on this panel, the former for her incisiveness, the latter for his fair-mindedness. I did wonder sometimes whether, like most of us, the panel didn't tend to belabour, if not dead, at least expiring, donkeys—New Zealand's Puritanism, its low standard of intellectual ideals, its conformism and regularity of social patterns. What they didn't comment on was the self-consciousness of New Zealanders which leads them to analyse, on radio panels and elsewhere, their own self-consciousness, with an intensity which even an American sociologist would find amusing. But the conclusion of Bernard Smyth, an admirable chairman, that liberty and discipline are inseparable was, if unexciting, certainly exemplary. Perhaps this is another New Zealand characteristic—to be exemplary, at the cost of excitement?

More Than Skin Deep

AN example of how a fine script, top performances and hard-headed direction can make a horrifying subject, didactically slanted, into excellent radio listening, was the BBC *Ordeal by Fire*. A dramatisation of the work of the Plastic Unit of the Queen Victoria Hospital, it used the case-history of a woman horribly burned when her dress caught fire at home, to show both the work of the Unit and to preach a sharp warning against carelessness in the home. But astute use of sound-effects, highly literate dialogue and firm characterisation dampened the gruesome element and aroused pity for the victim and admiration for the skill of the surgeons who enabled her to lead a normal life again. What impressed me most, however, was the psychological aspect of the ordeal—first, the woman's great emotional shock at her injuries and then the series of crises during the two years' treatment, handled here with firm tact and understanding by the doctors. The impression left was that a fundamental part of a plastic surgeon's work is psychological—true of all good doctors. I suppose, but brilliantly implied in this feature. *Ordeal by Fire* again demonstrated that, in the field of radio documentary, the BBC has no equal, and few successful imitators.

—J.C.R.

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