

A Home, Husband, Bach Fugues And Babies

Eileen Joyce, London's Laurels Upon Her, Has Simple Ideas: Wouldn't Be A Platinum Blonde

(A Special Interview With the "Radio Record").

"SOMEWHERE in England, or maybe Melbourne—I'd like a home where I could have a husband and babies, and do some cooking and play Bach fugues. I adore playing Bach."

"There wouldn't be much time for Bach fugues when you'd got through with the cooking and the husband and the babies."

A sigh. "No, I suppose there wouldn't. Besides, my ideas are a bit Victorian. Men don't seem to want to get married and have babies to-day. You, for instance—do you want babies?"

I confessed that there WERE things I wanted more.

Eileen Joyce, I had to keep telling myself during the talk, was a really famous pianist who'd had columns in the English papers, more columns in the Australian ones, and who was now spending August in New Zealand instead of accepting that coveted invitation to play a Beethoven concerto at the Queen's Hall, London, this month. I'd prepared all sorts of important questions—Who were the big figures in London music to-day? Had broadcasting at Home raised the standard of musical appreciation?

Instead, I found myself telling her what made gin slings go pink. ("It's supposed to be cherry brandy, but I think it's only raspberry," I said, idiotically.) And then we talked about Marlene Dietrich's eyebrows—whether they were shaved right off and just painted in that queer way, or whether an amusing Providence had really presented her with them.

I tried to pull the interview back on the rails. "Do you think there is greater appreciation of music in Australia to-day than when you left eight years ago?"

"Heavens! I've not the faintest idea," laughed Eileen Joyce. "You see, I left Australia when I was 14, and a 14-year-old girl's ideas on good music or bad aren't exactly profound."

"We lived at Boulder City, and it was the eeriest sensation in the world when I walked across the floor again and looked at the old piano—my father had bought it for a pound from a drinking saloon. I struck a chord on it and the past came flying back—the kid with pigtailed and brown legs; washing dishes; practising long hours on the dear, funny, old piano; the blinding sunlight and corrugated-iron of a typical Australian township."

Then several fairy godfathers stepped into Eileen Joyce's life. A passing priest heard her playing on the old piano, and arranged for her to be sent to Loretta Convent in Perth. . . . Percy Grainger and Wilhelm Backhaus heard her play. . . . Grainger said, "Send her to America." . . . Backhaus said Leipzig. She went to Leipzig.

But the little Saxony city, with its glistening towers and twisty streets, left the little

girl with a lump in her throat and a dull sort of pain in her heart—a heart that cried out fiercely for a glimpse of the hazy blue distances of Australia, for the scent of the gum leaves and the acrid smoke of distant bush fire, for the skin-pricking heat of the gaudy Australian sunshine. Homesickness had reduced Eileen Joyce to just an ordinary little girl.

It was two New Zealanders who brought the little garden of genius into blossom again. They took Eileen Joyce off to London, where she was introduced to Albert Coates. Luckily, she had a (Continued on page 58.)



The girl who confessed that practice was "tiresome, maddening, irksome"—Eileen Joyce, the famous pianist, now in New Zealand. (A special Spencer Digby study.)