

Listening While I Work (15)

By "Materfamilias"

THE LOST DESTROYER sounds as though it will be a good war-mystery thriller. It is a BBC production and unfortunately a serial, but I think we were told that there are only six episodes. That is a consolation to me. I like to know when I begin listening to a serial whether I shall be expected to listen every week for a month or a year. Between these two there is a world of difference. It is not merely that I object to having a story hanging over me for months almost as much as I object to having a half-read book dragging on. With a half-read book I have at least the satisfaction—or dissatisfaction—of knowing that it is my fault that the book is not read. I could make the effort if I wished, even if it meant sitting up all night. But with a long serial the story is dealt out in small doses at the whim of the producer or author or whoever is responsible. The end fades off into eternity. Places, characters, events, interests, everything may change except the name of the serial and its leading

characters, and still it goes on relentlessly. If you listen once in three weeks or so you can pick up adequate knowledge of what's what—enough at least to keep alive your friendship over the fence with a lettuce-growing neighbour. But apart from acquiring a vegetable or so over the fence on the strength of a discussion of the virtues of John Wayne or the happenings in *Judy and Jane*, I cannot say that I have found much entertainment myself in long serials. So I hope that I heard rightly that *The Lost Destroyer* was in six episodes. And I wish I could have it all in one evening or at the most two.

THE FATAL STEP (2YA, Sunday, January 23) was described as a problem play. I found a problem all right, though not the one that I was meant to find. My problem was to envisage, in the one character, a man who was brutal enough to murder his wife, a doctor clever enough to discover a cure for cancer, and a scientist bad enough to be willing for his discovery to die with him. I always imagined that scientists were as closely wedded to their discoveries as to their wives—or more so. In this case he could not have been very devoted to his wife or he would not have murdered her. O.K. But why should he want his discovery to die, too? Well, I don't know. I looked forward to meeting Dr. Parker, but as the story books say,

it was not to be. Instead we had a long session with the Home Secretary, who takes so long making up his mind whether Dr. Park should be reprieved or not that the authors find a convenient way of letting him off making his decision.

* * *

STILL, *The Fatal Step* was a change from the usual run of radio plays. It depended on an idea instead of on action and plot. There was a problem, and quite an interesting one. Should a criminal condemned to death be hanged if by staying alive he could be the means of saving thousands of sufferers from cancer? But there was not enough beyond the problem. To write a detective story, says Dorothy Sayers, you first need the idea or inspiration for your story. That is the nucleus: the problem. But the hard work is in the working out of the plot and characters. I felt with this play that the whole thing hung too precariously on one idea. The beginning, with the judge's summing-up of the case and the discussion among the jurymen, was good. After that the play deteriorated into a tedious series of discussions between the Home Secretary and others as to whether our doctor should be hanged or pardoned. He needed first to be brought to life. But the fault lay partly also with the actors. The voices were

(continued on next page)

Master



don't plaster



the Hair



VANBRO

Hair Cream 1/7 NON-OILY NON-SCENTED

For Shoppers Bros. Ltd., Lower Taranaki St., Wellington.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Thousands upon thousands of Radiotron Valves are on "Active Service" in the various war zones—on the land, in the air, on the sea, and under the sea.

To keep up with this enormous war demand, only a few Radiotrons can be released for civilian use.

But the few that are available are well worth seeking—Radiotron Valves have such a long life.

Radiotrons

The LONG-LIFE VALVE

N.Z. Distributors:
THE NATIONAL ELECTRICAL AND
ENGINEERING CO. LTD.

Branches all Main Centres

Beautiful Grandmothers

Try this simple easy way to look fresh and young



SPECIAL ingredients are scientifically blended in the renowned formula used for twenty years in making Crème Tokalon White Colour (non-greasy). It refreshes and improves the appearance of your skin. Makes it look fresh and young, feel good and smell good. Commence using it today and look younger every morning. Successful results guaranteed or money refunded. Obtainable at all Chemists and Stores.

Creation of Tokalon Ltd.,
Avon House, Oxford Street, London,
Manufactured by Salmond & Spraggon Ltd.,
Maritime Building, Wellington.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, FEBRUARY 4