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G-4

Listening While I Work (34)

By "Materfamilias"

THE announcement of the Allied landings in France broke into our programmes with dramatic suddenness and it is to the credit of the NBS that they were ready with a selection of stirring records—a sober and dignified accompaniment to the exciting news. This good beginning on the Tuesday night was continued on the Wednesday morning and so made it tolerable for even radiophobes to leave on their sets for news flashes.

* * *

SHORTAGE of electricity has led to shortening of listening hours. This might be an advantage. Rationing should help us to appreciate what we can get of the rationed goods. There should be fewer people turning sets on and leaving them on for the day. The more often we consciously turn a set on or off the more often do we consciously decide that we want to listen. All the same, the effect of cutting off radio from 11 a.m. to 12 noon from the Wellington stations has its disadvantages too. It increases the proportion of "Breakfast Music" and "Music While You Work," and it gives a rather jam-packed hour of devotional service followed by one or two talks and then news. The two interludes of good music which usually came from 10.30 a.m. and again at 11.20 a.m. have had to be cut out. Except for the short Morning Star programme at 9.30 a.m. there is very little to satisfy the morning listener who doesn't like talks or jazz or musical comedy. There is not much, for instance, that would be restful for the convalescent.

* * *

IN a recent article in *Picture Post*, Rebecca West has a good deal to say about the new General Forces programmes of the BBC. The purpose of these programmes is to link men in the Forces with people at home in England so that they should feel less out of touch with each other. We do not hear these particular items here but a good many of Miss West's criticisms apply quite aptly to us. She makes three main points. The first is that there is a preponderance of bad variety music, the second that there are too many bits and pieces, and the third that there are not enough serious talks. As I heartily agree with what she has to say on the last two counts and as she says what she has to say far better than I could I shall quote from her:—

"This (the obsession with brevity) is a manifestation of a modern folly which is always cropping up in some new field, and always brings disaster with it. Years ago some simple-minded person began to talk of the 'modern tempo.' He had apparently noted the undeniable fact that in the modern factory the machines tick over more rapidly, and that modern means of transport, such as electric railways, motor-cars and airplanes, carry people a long distance in a very short time, and had formed the curious conclusion that we who are served by the machines would have to keep the same pace as those servants, and would spend our lives rushing about at top speed. We would therefore have far less time for our recreations. This is a complete fallacy. The machine gives us more leisure, not less. . . . This mistaken passion for brevity works havoc on our General Forces programme. . . . There are innumerable items lasting five minutes, ten

(continued on next page)

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