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audience, though not immediately to her, that everybody is doing his or her best to drive her quite mad.

Everybody, that is, except the local doctor (Franchot Tone) who, by taking her for motor-drives and paying her amorous compliments, tries during the daytime to counteract the effect of creaking doors, mysterious interruptions to the lighting system, and weird voices calling her name from the swamp which disturb her at night. Amid the mental torment to which she is thus subjected, it is a relief to the girl to discover that all these scary goings-on are not the hallucinations of a disordered mind, but are the outcome of a deliberate plot; that her uncle and aunt are not her uncle and aunt; that the smooth-tongued visitor (Thomas Mitchell) who seems to run the place, has already committed three murders and is not averse from a few more; and that the overseer (Elisha Cook, jr.) is quite as unpleasant a specimen as he looks. It is still a relief even though it means that, having failed to dispose of her by psychological methods, the gang will have to use a more direct approach and that her friend the doctor is threatened by the same watery end as she is.

Though it never gets much beyond the just-average class, *Dark Waters* has some passages which suggest that, if handled with more imagination and finesse, it could have been a high-grade thriller. The scene where things go bump in the night and voices call from the swamp; the scene where the heroine catches her "aunt" out in a verbal slip and realises

that though her sanity is not in danger her life is; even the scene where the wicked overseer disappears, gurgling horribly, beneath the quicksands—these are moments of good quality melodrama. But the film does not take full advantage of its opportunities, particularly its atmospheric opportunities. Much more could have been done to heighten and make realistic the tension in the story, as well as in the heroine's mind, by paying greater attention to the settings and especially to the humid, oppressive atmosphere of the swamp-lands. The acting is similarly uneven. I have seen Thomas Mitchell more happily cast, but when it comes to buying a theatre seat, he can have my money any time he likes. Since I saw him as the orgiastic drummer boy of *Phantom Lady* I count Elisha Cook, jr., among my favourite exponents of screen nastiness. Fay Bainter is also rather effective, masquerading as a silly woman. But Franchot Tone is rather too suggestive of a sheep in wolf's clothing when he starts making polite passes at the heroine the moment he meets her, and is not much more convincing when he turns the tables on the villains in the final sequence. As for Merle Oberon, her mental agony, upon which almost the whole story depends, seldom goes much deeper than her make-up.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

PEACETIME activities are reflected in the items of the National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 219, showing at all the principal theatres throughout the Dominion for this week beginning November 9. There is the "Spring Show at Hastings," "Wind, Sand and Motor Bikes" (at Waikanae), "Clothes for Europe" and "Servicemen's Bowls."

ANOTHER "MILITARY" SECRET"

The Truth About A Popular Session

ANOTHER of those stories which can now be told concerns Station 2YD, Wellington.

Station 2YD had received many requests for light entertainment from members of the forces in camps throughout New Zealand and in the nearer Pacific Islands, so it organised a "Revue Company of the Air."

Each week for three years it has been presenting shows which gave listeners the impression that they were actually from the stage of some military camp. Preliminary announcements each night referred to a full house, the conductor of the "pit band" raising his baton, the rise of the curtain, and the nervousness of the first artists to appear on the bill and break the ice, and so on.

There was not a flesh-and-blood artist among them—they were recordings.

The show was unusual in many ways, and the success of the illusion was shown by a letter from some people in the North Island. A family argument developed over the names of some of the artists. The head of the house was so sure that it was a stage performance that he inquired if some of the people on the hill could be persuaded to appear at a concert in the home town.

Many thousands have enjoyed these sessions, which went under the general name of "For the Boys Off Duty," but it meant much research in the programme department. Section after section of records was combed through for variety records which could be made up

into a non-stop half-hour show each week.

In the three years, 1,500 items were presented without repetition. Certain parts of old recordings were sandwiched in with modern arrangements, to assist the illusion and to make it appear that a big stage performance was going on.

On October 31, Station 2YD presented a recall of the most popular items, in a full hour's show.

State Quartet for N.S.W.

READERS who saw a recent news item in *The Listener* about the recording in Australia of a string quartet by Alfred Hill may remember that Neville Cardus, the English music critic now living in Sydney, was quoted as suggesting that New South Wales should follow Queensland's example in subsidising a permanent string quartet ensemble. Since then something has evidently come of the idea, for the Sydney Sun of September 11 carried an interview with Alfred Hill himself on the question of the "promise of the Acting-Premier (Mr. Baddeley) to recommend a State subsidy for a string quartet." Mr. Hill warmly applauded the announcement with a proviso.

"The first thing to do," he said, "is to form the quartet in principle and leave the selection of the personnel to experts. The Government should no more say who is to be in the quartet than it should say who is to be in an orchestra."



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