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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Children's Book Week

THERE were some excellent and enthusiastic talks on the radio during Children's Book Week, in connection with which the Dunedin Public Library had a remarkable exhibition of children's books on display. I can't help feeling the eye to be a better advocate than the ear in this matter; parents may listen to an enthusiast urging them to buy and read respectively, but it means little unless the books are there to choose from. Never in any bookshop have I seen such a collection of books as the Dunedin Library offers for children, nor could any parent hope to afford many of them. I therefore suggest a Library Ticket as a Christmas present for an importunate offspring; it has the merit of affording more reading matter than the child can ever devour, and also, which will appeal to Dunedin people, it costs exactly nothing. Add to this the purchase of some of those colourful books with which the shops are crammed, but don't forget, when making your choice, that some of the best children's books have been published here in New Zealand.

"Sir . . ." said Dr. Johnson

JOHN REID, who recently gave a talk on Dr. Samuel Johnson, from 1YA, is one of our very best radio speakers in this type of subject. His argument as a whole is carefully worked out, the individual sentences nicely balanced, and his phrases made lively by a discriminating choice of words. All this is probably the result of hard work in preparation, but when he comes to the microphone the hard work is forgotten and a charming informality appears. His voice, which is becoming ever more reminiscent of the voice of one of our most eminent ecclesiastical speakers, has still not enough evenness of intonation for perfect broadcasting, but this will probably come. In the meantime one enjoys Mr. Reid's individuality with its flicks of irony and subtly insinuated provocations which make one sit up and listen and often wish to argue. In dealing with Dr. Johnson, who was listed in the programme as a "Notable British Wit," the speaker might have taken the easier way and dealt with his subject merely as a wit. There is plenty of material here and it is a popular conception. Instead of this he went to some trouble to give a well-rounded picture of the man, stressing his robust and forthright pugnacity, his learning and his generosity, and above all the vigorous moral qualities—all the factors which, added to his wit, gave him his outstanding place among the literary men of his time, and his permanent place in the affections of Englishmen.

Facts for Females

THE information to be won from the "For My Lady: Information Corner" session at present running from 1YA is of an ornamental rather than a useful nature. Some remarks about a man called Snow, an early chronicler of London, set the ball rolling the other day; and somehow or other Sir Walter Raleigh soon came into the conversation with mention of a little trouble he got into over

an acrostic he wrote to one Bess Throgmorton, maid-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth. It fell into the good Queen's hands, and she took it hard when she found it was not for her. Somebody then sang a song from *Merrie England*, and within a few seconds we were hearing about fleas and Louis XVI. There was a good opening here for the "Song of the Flea" which was duly sung, thence to golf and the original meaning of the term "getting into a scrape," with Clapham and Dwyer to bring the session to a conclusion. Never, outside my dreams, have I known a quarter-hour packed so gloriously with inconsequential images.

It Wouldn't Have Done for the Duke . . .

A JOAN BUTLER farce is now coming from 3YA in serial form, no doubt to the general delight. I remember a newspaper reviewer, commenting on one of her innumerable works, remarking on its close adherence to the canons of the Master Wodehouse; and remembering the subsequent dismal fate of that great man, I wonder whether Miss Butler is not the last of her line. Old jokes never



die, they say; but how prehistoric seem these jests about impecunious aristocrats pawing the coronet and acting manservant to American millionaires. For the social changes which made these high-life tragicomedies a possible subject of popular mirth all occurred some forty years ago; and the joke has long ceased to have the faintest relevance to the life of the laughers and the world they know. The silly ass with the monocle and the braying voice has joined the Victorian masher in limbo—George Orwell says he was killed at Mons—correspondents who met Wodehouse in Berlin say he was himself the last of the breed; and the whole frame of facetious references exists only in fiction and for the delusion of untravelling Americans. I fear we must say "Ichabod" to Joan Butler and her butlers, her earls, her footmen and her pork-packers; but it is certainly fun while it lasts.

That Shakespearian Rag

LATE one night this week I tuned out of the morose buzzing of a Master in Lighter Mood and into a light session from 3ZB, and out of the machine came some unknown young woman, of a dance band whose name I never caught, presenting Shakespeare's "Sigh no more, Ladies," to the most thoroughly twentieth-century tune imaginable. You shudder. Almost, remembering past horrible experiences, I shudder with you. Yet it was surprisingly likeable, neither grotesque nor pretentious; the singer, rising to her better material, succeeded in making a successful marriage of words and tune—the rather wry tone of both helping her. The points which arise out of this odd little happening are, I think, two: first, it reminds us how much of the horror of the average mush song