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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Off With Their Heads

THE producers and begetters of the dramatised episodes from *Alice in Wonderland* and its sequel, should be lightly boiled and fed to the Jabberwock on a charge of sacrilege. I do not mind Tweedledee having a Lancashire accent, for that is the best of tongues in which to say "Contrariwise:" the gentleman who acts the Caterpillar and also (I think) Humpty Dumpty is admirably cast; I even tolerate Arthur Askey as the Mad Hatter, whom he doesn't in the least resemble. What I do wish to curse and deride, with all the rage of the purist and fundamentalist, is the practice of inserting songs in that inspired text, for which I can find no warrant in the master's original writings. There are at least three; and the crime they amount to is far more heinous than that (for instance) of A. A. Milne, who made a play out of "The Wind in the Willows" which was not very like it. For Milne made no bones about his adaptation; it was a different thing with a different title; but this is supposed to be the work of Lewis Carroll. Swing "John Peel," if you must; but additional songs should not be inserted in the *Alice* Saga without large labels signed by the producer, saying "It is my own invention."

### Yankenstein

BEFORE we leave the subject of Frankenstein and other monsters that have got out of hand, somebody should surely mention the U.S.A. News and Commentary. In the days when what America was doing and thinking was a matter of hourly urgency, when we needed all our news to be served to us piping hot, we were very glad to have this session put across from main national stations at the first possible moment, even though it interrupted the general programmes. Can we not now relax a little, plan our evenings in a more orderly and consecutive way? At 7 p.m. we hear the Stock Exchange and market reports, followed by some local news items. Then comes various fill-ins until 7.30 when "God Save the King" ushers in the evening programme. Every evening the unfortunate programme organisers must find something to fill in these next 14 minutes before the voices from America come through. Sometimes reception is such that the voices are noisy; always it is necessary to make some adjustment to one's set when they begin, or again when they finish. If it is not possible to have them earlier, say at 7.15, could they not be kept in cold storage until 8.45 or 9.30? Both the news programmes and the general programmes would have better attention from us if they kept themselves to themselves, and allowed us sufficient time to concentrate on them.

### Sleepers Awake!

A CHARMING and gracious little gesture by the main National stations is the playing, immediately after the 11.0 p.m. news, of a few minutes' Meditation Music. The custom has been pleasantly observed at Station 2YA, where it has become a more or less recognised thing (I speak from sporadic experience only,

however) to play the slow movement of some symphony, concerto, sonata or quartet—at any rate, some not too noisy piece of a lyrical nature and occupying no more than two sides of a record (out of consideration for the technician, who can go home all the sooner if the piece is short). For those who have bedside radios this is a pleasant custom, because one can always shut off the National Anthem if it is not desired to stand at attention in pyjamas, and it is pleasant to fall asleep with a Mozart adagio vibrating in the memory. But I wonder what 2YA was getting at when it put on the slow movement of Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony at this time the other night—the movement, that is, with the unexpected loud bang that made the ladies jump in London.

### Erewhon

SAMUEL BUTLER sits now in some strange nook of the next world, awaiting with what patience he can muster the advent of Bernard Shaw, probably the only other human being in all space and time—except perhaps Diogenes the



Cynic—with irresponsibility of genius to match his own. But Butler, for all the determinedly mundane and unromantic quality of his writings, had a gift of poetic imagination all his own. This was somehow the dominant note of the BBC's "Have You Read?" feature dealing with his "Erewhon"; the journey up the unknown pass, the fallen idols booming in the wind and darkness, and the new land disclosed from the hillside at dawn. Swift wrote nothing better than this in its marriage of poetry and satire. It is interesting to speculate on the extent to which Butler's sojournings above the Rangitata may have influenced his writings; and how it was that he chose a land which later writers know above all for its lack of human records and ancient monuments, on which to project his fantasy of fallen idols and the city of the mind's other side. How characteristic of that land, by the way, to let the hut whose building by his own hands he somewhere describes, and which could