

to patriotic ardour. Thenceforward losing all relation to reality, he meets his end amid a welter of defiance, flights, mobs thirsting for blood, unfortunate aristocratic maidens, jealousies, betrayals, repentances, fates worse than death, and one thing and another, all culminating in that inevitable fourth act in the condemned cell. Yet the strange thing is that Giordano, in spite of cluttering up his stage with this undeniable drivel, worthy of Hollywood at its worst, managed to insert one or two moments not without historical authenticity. But why is it that we recognise the Revolution as the beginnings of modern democracy and are content that the only works of art inspired by it should be such as this and Baroness Orczy's, I cannot imagine.

3YA's Mr. Pickwick

IF that weekly surprise programme, "Reserved," has a fault, it is a certain tendency to impressive emotion and descriptions of the natural scenery. Therefore we are pleasantly surprised when "Reserved," the first of 1946, turned out to be Charles Laughton's reading of "Mr. Pickwick's Christmas." This in turn proved, of course, to be the two episodes "the Ride to Muggleton" and "the Ball at Dingley Dell"—which were once before presented in a similar manner by 3YL in a literary reading.



The Laughton version had all the appropriate gusto and included two or three episodes—the noble colloquy between Sam Weller and the Fat Boy, and the concerted assault on Mr. Pickwick when he stood under the mistletoe—which we missed before. But I must demand, with all the purist's sternness, what became of the codfish? The codfish was a beast of leviathan dimensions which travelled on the Muggleton coach, and without it that journey is not itself.

Time, Gentlemen

SOMEWHERE round New Zealand there may be still floating an unresolved chord, cut off in its prime. Maurice Clare, broadcasting from 3YA with Frederick Page, Beethoven's Sonata No. 7 for violin and piano, had further confirmation of the axiomatic condition of time which is always marching on and waiting for no man. The listener was even more acutely aware of this as the above mentioned chord was torn from its fellows to make way for a national link-up for a commentary on the New Zealand Bowling Championships. It was by no means a deliberate exaltation of bowls at the expense of music, but rather that the musician had borrowed from the more leisurely life of the bowler. Mr. Clare preceded his playing with some talking. There is a difference, an important one, between a few apt introductory remarks, and a lecture. Mr. Clare's commentary would have made an interesting talk by itself, but as a prelude, it took too much time from what was essentially a broadcast of music. And so, Clare and Page were driven off the green at the last head.

Tennis on the Air

THE meeting between Stanley and Livingstone was a most interesting one. It would be, wouldn't it?—A. K. Turner, commenting from 1YA on the

New Zealand Tennis Championships. Mr. Turner's commentary has been a refreshing change from the usual jargon of the sports commentator who, having to keep moving with the game, has no time for a nice choice of word or phrase. The sports commentator has a style all his own, somewhat limited as to vocabulary perhaps, but expressive for his particular purpose. Mr. Turner made no attempt to give a ball by ball, or even game by game account, but contented himself, very wisely, with recapturing the excitement of the highlights. There were also some sidelights, presumably unintentional, as when Miss So-and-So was said to have lobbed over her opponent's head, "always her weak spot" remarked the commentator. I hope sports announcers are protected against libel action.

"Just Ordinary People"

ONE of the amazing things, when you come to think of it, is the popularity, in radio entertainment, of people who are neither handsome nor beautiful, and sometimes not particularly gifted in the musical sense either. For example, George Formby. For example, Flanagan and Allen. For example (and this is what set me thinking of it) the Hulberts. Who would credit Jack, Claude, or Cicely with any extraordinary good looks, or maintain that they can even sing in tune? Yet theirs are among the most-loved records, and you can always get a chuckle out of them even if you've heard them doing the same thing a hundred times before in exactly the same way. I suppose the secret lies in the fact that they aren't especially gifted with faces or voices; we recall Jack's jutting chin, Claude's receding ditto, Cicely's homely features, we hear them singing rather on the flat side and making no attempt to take the high notes, and we are lulled into a comfortable sense of superiority. We think, "After all, they're just ordinary people like me; you don't have to be gifted to do that sort of thing—why, I could do it standing on my head!" Just try (even right side up) and the whole thing becomes a mystery once more; comedians are born, not made, and evidently the only successful way to become one is to choose your parents carefully.

Music of the People

WHO are the people? In their name much is demanded and much promised, much is excused and much forgiven. They are a statistical factor to prove many a point and settle many a disputation. Despite their ubiquity the people still preserve a close anonymity. They are impersonal, indefinable, and therefore unsatisfiable. It was with some misgivings then that I turned to Henri Penn's presentation, "Music of the People." One might assume perhaps that these people were those from whom has come through the ages a music strong in its simplicity, and, above all, in its sincerity and truthfulness—folk music. Such, apparently, was the intention. The realisation was much less. The listener was regaled with a number of shop-worn ballads—"By the Waters of Minnetonka," "Song of the Cuckoo," "An Eastern Prayer"—wrapped up in soap opera commentary. Any connection with folk music was remote. The people here represented lived among antimacassars and aspidistras in Edwardian drawing-rooms.

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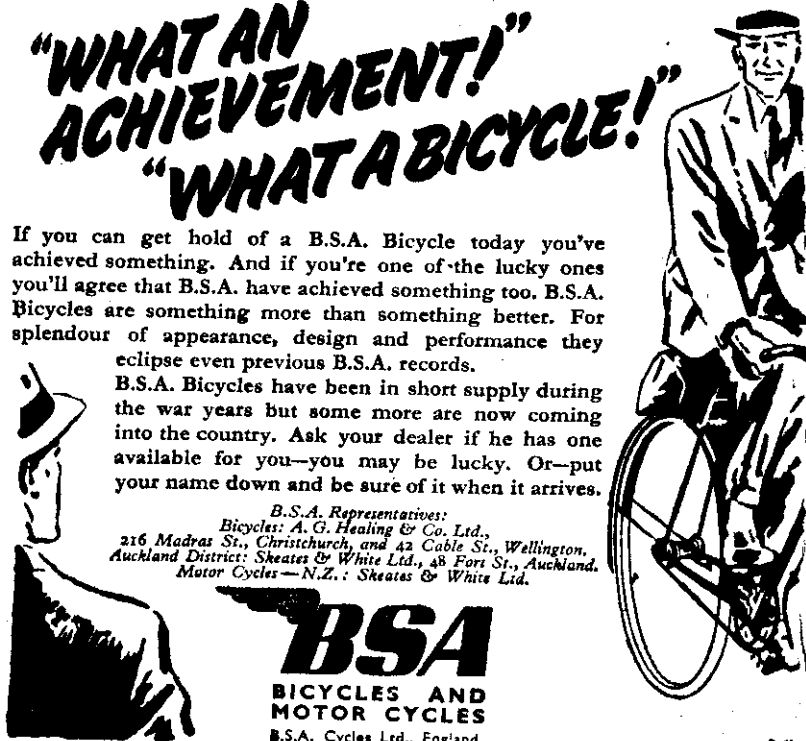
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