

In Praise of Digests

*THE modern mind will only act
Upon a pre-digested fact:
It categorically refuses
To waste its choice cerebral juices
On the wisdom of the ages
In more than 70 close-clipped pages.*

*BY a kind of boa-constriction
It reduces fact and fiction
Until a paragraph of patter
Gives the guts of any matter,
And the tyro stands in awe
Before a one word line by Shaw.*

*THE modern mind is so streamlined
It leaves no waste at all behind;
But in a column it will take
The entrails out of Chiang Kai-Shek.
And in four lines by Ogden Nash
Turn Hiroshima into ash.*

*THE modern mind belongs, I guess,
To men who will not retrogress;
But who, with passionate devotion,
Will follow up the latest notion,
Discarding bulk as antiquated
Now books and brains are dehydrated.*
—Anton Vogt

2YA on February 23, made interesting listening. Curious as it may seem, we know relatively little here of Australian musical activities, particularly in the way of composition, and one does not know whether these pieces are representative of contemporary Australia. They were not pretentious, nor did it seem that they were intended to be. They conveyed the spirit of a friendly pastime and in the two-piano numbers with orchestra—"Idyll," by Lindley Evans, and "Phantasie Concerto," by Frank Hutchens—written no doubt for their own playing, the friendliness was even more evident. The playing of the two composers was first-class and the orchestra, for the most part, rose to the occasion. We would like to hear more Australian music.

More New Zealand Music

H. C. LUSCOMBE'S Sonata for Violin and Piano which won the Philip Neill Memorial Prize for composition in 1945 is graceful; it is, in a way, elegant. Too facile, perhaps, its melodies (and there are plenty of them) have a mild flavour of Elgar, but they do not always lead somewhere, as Elgar's always do. Nevertheless this sonata is not music indigenous to New Zealand. Its old-fashioned harmony, and rhythmic patterns, which become rather obvious in the last movement, recollect too much other days, other ways, and other places. This is not so much a criticism as a qualification, for the sonata is competently written and pleasant to listen to. Moya Cooper-Smith in the broadcast from 1YA gave a confident and convincing interpretation of the violin part, with the composer at the piano.

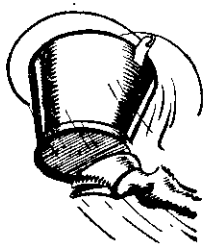
Calling Miss McKenzie

WHEN occasion does arise for any discussion in England of New Zealand's broadcasting system, it seems there is a lack of accurate information on the

subject. This is a pity. Some time last year I heard the BBC Brains Trust discussing the broadcasting of Parliament; someone said it would be a good thing as long as a separate transmitter was provided, and there was no dislocation of programmes. Someone else said that was the way it was in New Zealand, and the discussion then proceeded on this assumption. It would have been so much more interesting and salutary for us to have heard the Brains Trust's opinion on what really happens here. Then just the other day, the BBC's Radio Newsreel interviewed Miss Jean McKenzie (of the New Zealand delegation to the United Nations conference). They asked her about women's part in political life here, and she replied that our women have politics brought into their homes by the Parliamentary broadcasts, and "they also listen to radio talks and discussions; in this way, world affairs are brought into the home in New Zealand." Calling Miss McKenzie: Where are those talks on world affairs? (or did you just mean we can be proud that we listen to Wickham Steed and the American "commentators"?). When are those "discussions" broadcast?

... Sir, She Said

CHRISTCHURCH programme-watchers are hereby warned to search like hawks for all future programmes compiled and presented by R. R. Beauchamp. He it was, some months ago, who was responsible for "The Shepherd's Song," based on the 23rd Psalm, a particularly attractive mingling of music and information. He followed this up



the other night with "The Milkmaid's Song," based on English, Scottish, French, and Swiss folk-music sprung from the cowbells. While I hardly suppose that this broadcast will turn Tai Tapu into a nest of singing birds—for the old folk-music is a thing past and these milking tunes have only indirect relevance to modern pasturing and pasteurisation—I ended with the feeling of knowing things about the history of peoples that I had not known before. But the point of this programme was not so much in its didactic side—as was the case with its predecessor—as in the singing of the vocal quartet (anonymous) whom Mr. Beauchamp has to back him up. Here was singing exactly suited to a folk-song programme—and how rare this is one only knows on hearing it—using a minimum of musical accompaniment, and working with a clearness of articulation, a total absence of frills, and a plainness of statement which unmistakably showed singers desirous not of using their song as a means of making an impression, but of simply laying before the listener a form of art in which he might be interested. It practically never happens that we are given song or music, not because it is famous or spectacular or exciting, but because it is interesting; and similarly it is very rare that we hear singing with that quality defined by Quiller-Couch as essential to folk-song, an element "seraphically free from taint of personality." But all this was here

and was so exactly suited to its subject that it is and will remain something to have heard Mr. Beauchamp's programme.

A Quiz with Spadework

THE Musical I.Q. from 4ZB is an exception among quiz programmes in general. Since listeners write their answers in the comfort of their own armchairs, with the possible aid of a Grove on one side and an Oxford Companion on the other, it might be imagined that the whole thing is a gift. This is not so. Anyone entering for this competition has to do a surprising amount of spadework before unearthing the answers. Given one excerpt from a composer's work, and one or two relevant facts such as the date of his death and the fact that he won the Prix de Rome, the listener who can't recognise the music will have to search methodically through many pages of information before the composer's name and nationality are revealed to him. In so doing, he will have learned several things he didn't know about that composer, and will have discovered, through following false clues, several other things about totally different composers and their works. Thus the Musical I.Q. instead of offering bribes for guesswork, in the manner of the average quiz, offers the listener the excitement of discovering, for himself, something he didn't know before. There is a prize, certainly, but there is also the fact of knowledge for its own sake, a reward of more value than any jackpot.



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