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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Fill-ups

THIS is not an invitation to have one on the house. It is a comment on what happens when the house, or in this case, the broadcasting station, has to put one on itself, when the programme is running ahead of time. Everyone connected with the presentation of radio programmes has a morbid horror of silence. Listeners must not be left alone with their thoughts, even for one moment, lest they switch off for a better consideration of them. From the beginning of broadcasting, every announcer and technician must have experienced those desperate minutes when something outside the scheduled programme has to be called for. Yet, too often it is something uncalled for, and the listener is jolted with the most extraordinary incongruities. Recently, for instance, 1YA, three minutes ahead of time, interpolated in a chamber music hour a recording of what seemed to be bar-room songs (no announcement was made). It was very jolly, but it wasn't chamber music; and a good deal of self-control was needed to preserve mental equanimity. Despite the familiarity of this experience, whoever is responsible for finding the extra record usually makes necessity mother to the invention of the moment. No provision seems ever to be made for a contingency that constantly recurs.

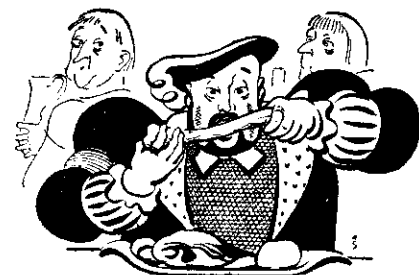
### Eisteddfodder

ST. DAVY'S DAY is past; and the wave of Welsh music has ebbed, leaving us a trifle dazed and filled with seasonable reflections on national character. An historian of considerable eminence but an individual turn of tongue has described the people in question as "a race of quarrelsome nightingales," in support of which view there is the remark of a thirteenth-century chronicler: "In their musical concerts they do not sing in unison like the inhabitants of other countries, but in many different parts; so that in a company of singers, which one very frequently meets with in Wales, you will hear as many different parts and voices as there are performers." The music of Wales may, I suppose, be said to have certain characteristics traceable to a Celtic background, but it is very different from the music of the other Celtic nations. This difference consists most obviously in the absence from the Welsh tradition of the nostalgia and obsession with defeat that dominates the Irish and Highlanders and their music. The Welsh decline to be repressed, a feature which has sometimes brought their Celtic neighbours to regard them with a certain coolness. The reason is probably that the Welsh succumbed to the brutal Saxon in the late Middle Ages, when nobody cared a fig for the clash of national cultures; and, aided by a succession of half-Welsh Kings in London—Lancasters, Yorks, and Tudors were able to preserve their speech and song in comparative peace. One cannot too much emphasise the importance to Welsh culture of a reserve of native art—uncomprehended or unheard of by the outsider—on which the nation could fall back. The Welsh

possess as a living fact what to their neighbours is a dying cause, or worse, a literary revival.

### ... "Rode Loathsome Gluttony"

"FOOD in Mediaeval and Tudor England" was the title of a recent A.C.E. talk from 3YA. I did not hear all of this talk, but have to assume that it dealt chiefly with general differences of diet and cookery—peacocks and porpoises and boars' heads and the like. A curious point, not touched on, in the history of food, is the intense moral condemnation pronounced by mediaeval ethics of the vice of gluttony. It was



one of the Seven Deadly Sins; Dante allotted a special corner of the Inferno to its practitioners; Spenser has a parade of the Vices in which Gluttony is depicted with especial vigour ("His belly was outblown with luxury and eke with fatness swollen were his eyne, and like a crane his neck was long and fine"); and a usually detached fifteenth-century historian says of an immoral potentate, "never was any prince more bloody, wicked, ignorant, lascivious or gluttonous than he," and he is not listing the vices in descending order. And we hear of feats of gluttony correspondingly stupendous; the Emperor Charles V may be said to have gorged himself to death, over a period of years. The Renaissance and Henry VIII's Reformation saw the last stage in the history of aristocratic ventripotence in the great entertainments of the Elizabethan nobles. After that came Puritanism and a commercial England which ate vastly but with less ostentation, and we hear of fewer cases in which food became literally an obsession. In the eighteenth century, denunciation of gluttony is almost unknown; yet it was an age of heavy feeders and for some perhaps dietary reason, one of greater average fatness—to judge from contemporary art. The probable explanation is that mediaeval official morals were dominated by a definite religion rather than generally accepted conventions, and in that religion asceticism had a definite place.

### Good Singing

CONSTANCE MANNING'S group of Russian songs from 1YA on March 6 was singing such as one always hopes for, but too rarely hears in studio broadcasts. The words, easy listening, were made poetry and one felt that the singer had reached the composer's innermost meaning. Phrasing was meticulous and well-modulated. In short, this was most enjoyable music. Yet this singer, in common with the few others whose singing rises above the average, is not heard often enough. It would appear