

palities, and national forces, but largely through the eyes of an old soldier of the Guard.

It owes a good deal, probably, to the famous *Memoirs of Sergeant Bourgogne*, which is one of the classical sources of information relating to the human side of 1812. It is in the charm and fidelity of the character drawing of this old soldier—Papa Barlasch, as he calls himself—that the great merit of the book resides. It is on Barlasch that the adapter has, very properly, concentrated most thoroughly. I doubt whether fiction can show a better example outside the pages of Kipling of the old type of professional soldier with his grumbles and his good nature, his contempt of the recruits he nursemaids, his ability to take care of himself, his looting proclivities, his combination of toughness and sentimentality. Barlasch, of course, stands out, but this story is no mere peg from which to hang one fine portrait.

There is the whole of the intricate, the exciting plot, which involves the Danzig family on which Barlasch is billeted. Sebastian, dancing master and French refugee, deeply involved with the German secret societies who plotted in those days against the Napoleonic tyranny. His two daughters, Désirée—

ingenuous without being insipid, cheerfully plucky without heroics — and Mathilde, who believed the world well lost, not for love but for ambition. There is the Polish Colonel de Casimir; and there are the two cousins, one serving in the French Army, the other in the British Navy; and there is the genuine atmosphere of that picturesque Baltic town which saw so much, and suffered so much, of history in 1812.

Merriman was not one of those authors who writes of Samarkand from an armchair in Bloomsbury, or of Alaska in a hotel in Torquay. He travelled widely, and when he wrote of a place he would go there and live there so that he could write of it, if not as a native at least as someone more than a visitor with a guide book.

The adapter of Barlasch is Norman Edwards, who has written two historical plays for broadcasting of some distinction—*Quarrel Island* and *The Queen of Baltimore*—and who, among other qualifications for a knowledge of the period, has one of the finest collections of books in existence dealing with Napoleon's last days at St. Helena. Frederick Lloyd will play Barlasch and Henry Ainley will tell the story. I expect this production to give me great pleasure. I hope you may share it.

NEW PRODUCTIONS FROM NBS STUDIOS

FOR the last few weeks all the concentrated nastiness of Armand Jean Du Plessis de Richelieu, the scheming French cardinal, has hung around the production studios of the NBS. But Bernard Beeby and his cast of actors and actresses have now turned to a

People who take part in radio plays are generally talented amateurs, taken from all sorts of daily occupations. The lawyer who draws your will might be an international crook in a crime drama when he isn't untying knots in red tape; the shipping clerk, whose sympathetic eye you try to catch from the end of the queue, may be a fairy prince in his radio moments, and the girl who says "Sorry" to your request for a packet of cigarettes might be a beautiful spy when facing the microphone.

As a wide range of talent is called for, fresh performers are always welcomed at the studios, mainly with the idea of presenting voices that are new to listeners.

Coming Attractions

Maltby's *The Rotters*, a one-hour comedy of a respectable family which turns out to be not quite so reputable, has been produced and recorded and will be on the air shortly. Another play on which the cast is now engaged is *One Hour, One Night*, by Edward Harding. This is a spy story dealing not so much with war as with international intrigue. The action starts with an unwise purchase of black market cigarettes and introduces a special branch of Scotland Yard. A thread of comedy runs through the play, though it is more in the situations than in the actual lines.

Other plays going into production shortly will be *Campground's Over Jordan*, by the Auckland writer John Gundry, and *Breaking Point*, by Mabel Constenduros. The first is a problem play whose main characters are a selfish husband, and a wife who is a concert pianist. The second is a stage play about a music-hall actress married to an aristocratic waster who enjoys her high salary while she is in love with somebody else.



BERNARD BEEBY
New voices are welcomed

different type of entertainment—topical rather than historic.

When we called the other day Richelieu had just been tucked away in his tomb in the 55th (and final) episode of this serial, and the staff was busy with preparations to produce several short plays, at the rate of one a week.



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