

impressive quarter-hour, first because Russian seems a language suited to loud and hearty singing, whether by males or by emancipated young women (probably wearing boots); but, secondly, because the Russians have evolved something highly out of the way in mass music. Granted (if you like) that it is state inspired, and in translation proves to be tirelessly and rather tediously propagandist in its sentiments; nevertheless its life and vigour and the manner in which the voices blend produces an effect not quite like anything else I know—and to compare these marches with the dismal Sousa-and-drum-major products of Britain and America is a little chastening. One can isolate in these songs numerous elements of folk-music but the essential thing about them is the revolutionary romanticism and swagger of the popular tradition built up in the Soviet Union—capable often enough of a distressing naïveté but full of a sort of aggressive cockiness and turbulent vigour, and undeniably fun.

An Englishman, a Scotsman . .

GERALD CHRISTELLER, whose baritone programmes prove him, if no more, one of the best selectors of interesting material among 3YA's studio artists, went on the air the other night with a programme called "Songs of Four Nations." This proved to be a bracket of one English, one Welsh, one Scottish, and one Irish. None of them were the familiar specimens selected by the usual folk-song enthusiasts; they had indeed the same arranger, Arthur Somervell, and there was something, not only the "arranged" music, which lifted them out of the category of folk-music pure and simple and nearer that of more sophisticated music. The English song, which bore the rather uncompromising title of "In Cupid's Garden," turned out an interesting specimen of the way in which the conceits of the sophisticated percolate down and become the material of popular ditties. Here was a theme as old, as literary and as fanciful as the troubadours and the Romance of the Rose, recounted in the vocabulary of Sam Weller—"Says I, my stars and garters, now here's a pretty go." The fact is that there is a continuity of history in even the most ephemeral kinds of popular music and a regular listener, who has to hear a good deal of ephemera, can diversify his leisure and find his imagination stimulated by tracing their origins.

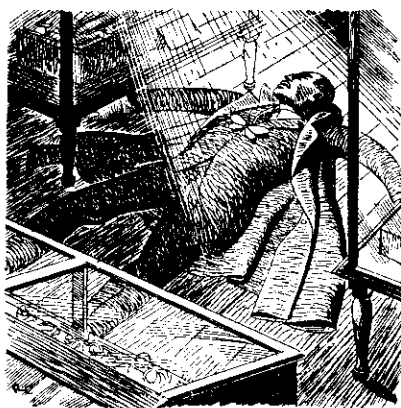
Lost Opportunity

I IMAGINE the story of Captain Scott is familiar to most people, especially to the people of New Zealand, since the geographical position of our country makes it the obvious base for Antarctic expeditions, and nobody could watch the loading of stores, the teams of dogs, the sub-zero clothing of the crews, and the departure of the ships from our ports without an intense excitement and interest in the achievement and the fate of the expeditions we have welcomed and farewelled. It was extremely disappointing, then, to listen to 4YO's presentation of "Achievement—Captain Scott," and find oneself listening to a stilted, uninspiring, schoolboyish type of play in which the only information given was what we already know—namely, that Scott reached the Pole but was forestalled by Amundsen, and that his party died in the attempt. Several times the phrase "valuable scientific observations" was used, but no

specific details of these were given; no details of the provisioning or manning of the Terra Nova; no description of the ship; not even a final reading of that most noble and tragic record, the last diary of a hero. It was a magnificent opportunity wasted.

"The 89 Men"

MAX AFFORD certainly writes a good thriller. The first instalment of *The 89 Men* from 4YA proved well up to his usual standard, although the introduction of the historic gibbet in the museum, and the stealing of the executioner's knife, reminded me too much of John Dickson Carr and *The Plague Court Murders*. Max Afford's is an ex-



cellent serial, in which the suspense is well maintained and the speakers are given characteristic dialogue which brings them alive as soon as they appear on the listener's mental screen; by no means an easy thing to do in radio. If you like your escape-literature to be well-constructed and of the kind which makes it appeal to the above-average intelligence, *The 89 Men* should be well worth your while.

Digest

THE NBS production, *Some Great Women Treated Lightly* scarcely lived up to its title in the case of Mary Shelley. Nobody could treat Mary Shelley lightly; nor did the author of this fragment do so, although he used the futuristic medium of the time-space-reporter to contact his subject. When I say that Mary Shelley's life and parentage, her love and literary output, her husband's character and genius, their remarkable ménage à trois with step-sister Clare, their famous friends and acquaintances, were all treated rapidly and succinctly in less than half-an-hour, it will be apparent that "sketchily" rather than "lightly" might have been the designation. What was packed into the too-short time, however, was enough to fill the listener with a desire for more, which is after all the main object of such a series. "Mary Shelley, her life and times" would indeed, if treated with the expansion such a subject deserves, fill many half-hours to the exclusion of other entertainment, and the reader can and should follow such a broadcast by intensive reading. But I was left with a tantalised feeling that more could have been done with minor details, which was unreasonable of me. For example—"Trelawny wanted me to marry him" says the widowed Mary Trelawny has necessarily to be dismissed in a couple of sentences—that amazing creature whose exotic and exciting life was an epitome of the whole romantic movement. I hope someone

some day will devote a whole play to Trelawny; a three-acter would indeed be scarcely long enough to contain all of him.

A Sign of Winter Coming

WINTER is surely on the way, for Australian stations are coming in, even on my poor set, with greater strength and clarity. There are certain excitements in listening in to Australia. For one thing it is always pleasant to find that the time is earlier than you thought it was. And there is always the enjoyment attached to hearing the unexpected. It may be only a variety show with, however, a few new jokes. Or it may be, as I am hearing now—Lili Kraus, Beethoven's Sonata in E Major, Op. 109; three Schubert Impromptus. This is more than real piano playing; it is real music. Every note, every phrase delivered with the confident assurance of musical integrity. In the playing of Lili Kraus there is no show of technique for its own sake, nor is sentiment turned into sentimentality. One forgets the pianist in remembering the music and the men who made it.

Family Music

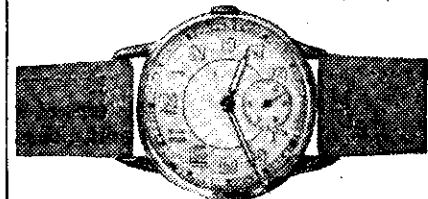
A GREAT deal of amusement should result from 4ZB's forthcoming programme comprising family-group performances. The announcer in his preliminary advertising asked for volunteer performances, suggesting that the possibilities were many—duets, trios, "or some family may even be able to enter a quintet!" Personally, I shall be astonished if any family is able and willing to do so; more's the pity. In the 18th Century large numbers of competent performers were by no means confined to such families as the Bachs, who among them might, at a pinch, have made up three or four quintets if required. Even in Victorian days, although the music was not of that rare variety performed and composed among the sons of Johann Sebastian, yet the family, we are told, gathered about the piano and harmonised effectively enough, lacking suitable alternative amusements. To-day, with families of one and two, the difficulty is not the standard of performance, but the numbers. Any modern quintet which appears in such a programme deserves first place, no matter what sort or standard of music it chooses to perform.

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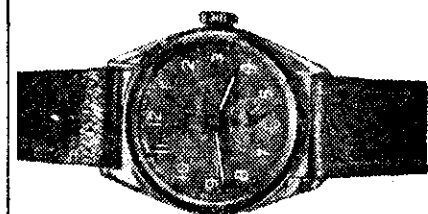
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