

Notes Like Mice

COUPERIN-LE-GRAND was a great man in his day, and when we settle down, if we ever do, to a simpler quieter life, he may be great again. He was to the harpsichord, you will remember, what Chopin was to the piano. It is time we shelved the idea that, because the piano is the newer instrument, it is therefore to be preferred to the harpsichord. The piano is different, of course; its range of expression may be greater, but with all its versatility it cannot recapture the delicacy, the precise rhythms, the attenuated tone of its elder sister. When Wanda Landowska plays Couperin on the harpsichord, a world of music is reopened, old stars twinkle anew, music becomes soft as dust, "small notes that run like mice bewitched by light."

Sur de Pont d'Avignon . . .

SOME months ago I recorded in these columns an unexpectedly successful attempt to express Shakespeare's "Sigh No More, Ladies," in the idiom of 20th Century popular music. A somewhat similar experiment has now been made by somebody on the French folk-song "The Bridge of Avignon," and the result is an interesting commentary on the methods by which our dance bands put their numbers together. The music for folk dance, being associated with a far more rigid and elaborate scheme of movement and gesture, possesses a definite pattern, which moves through repetition towards a climax which is part of the structure. Not so the 20th Century, as you may find from comparing these two versions; here the aim is solely to select and emphasise certain phrases, without any very definite relation to one another, and simply to repeat them with variations and improvisation, until an entirely stereotyped climax serves merely as a place at which to stop. The words are similarly treated, and a further difference exists in the words themselves. The French original dealt with communal song and dance and used general and impersonal terms—"l'on y danse," "all dance there," but the translation follows the set pattern of the modern, personal, episodic and sentimental—"we were dancing, we were dancing, dancing till the night was gone." It was an excellent comparative study.

Tough Questions for Housewives

THE HOUSEWIVES' QUIZ at 22B is good listening. A general quiz is usually a lively, hit-or-miss affair; this is



more in the nature of a brains trust—specialised questions answered with professional skill. It is always exhilarating to hear people discussing the details of their occupations with sureness and enjoyment as most of these com-

petitors do. Saturday morning is no longer the worst possible moment for these conferences, no longer a morning of confused cooking and shopping with no time and thought for the radio. Friday is now the dread day when the practice of the profession of housekeeping reaches its hectic climax; and whatever may be said against the present awful state of Fridays, there is no doubt that Saturday has changed for the better, and gives some space for enjoyment of the theoretical side of things. If there can be an increase of this kind of session during the week-end, it will be a pleasant sign (and one of the first) that the 40-hour week is meant to be observed by all members of the family.

Farm Woman's Diary

I FIND Mary Scott's talks always worth listening to, and last Saturday's continuation of the Farm Woman's Diary was no exception. Just the right type of listening for a Saturday morning now that Saturday, freed from the urgency of week-end shopping, has become a kind of non-sectarian Sunday. The Farm Woman of the *Diary* has the same knack of arousing our personal interest and affection for her as E. M. Delafield's Provincial Lady, but whereas the Provincial Lady has the advantage of being somewhat helpless and even scatterbrained, and thus appealing to our protective instinct, the Farm Woman has to win our sympathy the harder way. Perhaps in her case our intuitive liking springs from our shared experience, perhaps it has something to do with our knowing the same or similar people. But the Farm Woman's *Diary* is not only emotionally satisfying. This week at any rate there was a lot of information of a practical nature to be gleaned from it. As a city woman I have no great interest in the methods of resuscitating an almost dead lamb. But town and country are united in their quest for the infallible method for the home baking of bread, and though the Farm Woman's experiences serve rather to warn us of pitfalls than to arm us with knowledge we can feel that if we fail we fail in good company.

Great Woman

MY second experience of "Great Women Treated Lightly" proved no better an example of the "lightness" of the programme than my first, for it proved to be the history of Charlotte Corday, told in a very straightforward and effectively dramatic manner. To begin with, the play took the form of an imaginary dialogue between a modern reporter and Charlotte, but it soon became her own story as re-told by herself, and I was sorry not to hear the name of the actress who spoke the words of Charlotte, since her modulated, clear voice was instrumental in bringing the character vividly to life. The listener followed the girl, determined in her terrible purpose as the most blasé of assassins, into the shop where she bought the knife; to the home of Marat; into the very room where her irrevocable and horrible deed was accomplished; finally to the gaol where she awaited death. Told as a simple narrative, without any attempt to make a complicated drama of the events of the stark tale, this true story was more gripping than the most bloodthirsty of radio fiction.

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