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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

"Any News, Uncle?"

BEING once presented with a volume of Stacey Aumonier's short stories, and reading it through without a break, I decided even after such a concentrated dose that there were very few "misses" among them, and that most of the collection could be mentioned in the same paragraph, even if not in the same breath, as O. Henry. One of Stacey Aumonier's stories, "A Source of Irritation," I heard from 4YA, dramatised in a BBC production. It was a straightforward story with a racy narrative and a minimum of conversation, and it adapted well for radio. It concerned an old man, working in the fields year in and year out, who was driven nearly desperate by his niece's daily enquiry, "Any news, uncle?" One day in the fields, a spectacular adventure befell the ancient, which included his abduction in an enemy plane, his adventures in the front line, his astonishing return home just in time for tea and the girl's question, "Any news, uncle?" In a delightful climax, the old man rends her verbally for making useless and silly remarks, and not one word of his "news" escapes his angry lips. In this production (whether it was the fault of the author or of the adapter I don't know) there was certainly another "source of irritation" for the listener, the fact that, knowing no German, the old man was able to pick up useful information about the enemy, due entirely to the fact that they chose to reveal their plans in his hearing while evidently conversing among themselves in English. This seemed so obliging and incongruous on their part that it was immediately suspicious, and we could have done without this piece of neat detective-work on the part of the hero, since it quite spoilt the plausibility of an already incredible tale.

15 minutes too brief. In this short time Dr. Guy Harris, of Sydney, endeavoured to take the listener on an imaginary journey into the solar system, naming the planets, devastating several popular but apparently invalid theories about their origin, and leaving the layman whirling in space with nothing to support him but a few astronomical calculations. Fifteen minutes is too short a time for a speaker to get down to very detailed facts and just long enough to



whet the listener's appetite for more. Dr. Harris took us in an imaginary spaceship, propelled by atomic power, and our presumed speed was exactly that of light—a highly uncomfortable vehicle in which to travel, other than mentally, but one which is rapidly coming to sound less fantastic than it was to readers of Jules Verne. Indeed, in another talk on the same evening, Dr. C. M. Focken, of Dunedin, suggested casually enough that, thanks to the discovery of atomic power, inter-planetary travel is no longer beyond the bounds of present possibility. The difference in the presentation of these two talks was interesting. In each case there was a scientist, and a questioner (a layman, apparently). Dr. Harris seemed to address the less-than-average intelligence and told us little that we didn't already know, or couldn't have found out by consulting any book on popular astronomy. Dr. Focken, on the other hand, gave the listener abundant information which he couldn't have acquired without expert help in searching for it and analysing it, and at the same time contrived to suggest that the Average Listener must be equipped with a brain capable of receiving and tabulating the proffered information for future reference. Dr. Focken's talk was therefore a greater success, from the listener's point of view, than Dr. Harris's. Nobody likes to be talked down to.

Radio Gazette

NOT unworthy child of the BBC's Newsreel is 2ZB's Radio Gazette, which comes over on Sunday night when the jaded listening appetite is ready to be titillated by something a little cruder, a little less pre-digested, than newsreels heard at other times of the week. For the Gazette does not undergo the studio purifying process, but is served straight over the wire, piping hot, and as acceptable as fish and chips out of the paper. It's a case of the moving microphone writes and, having writ, moves on. Each Gazette is made up of five or so different interviews in as many

(continued on next page)

The Glamour Was Missing

THE BBC producers and actors in *The English Theatre* did their best with "Musical Comedy," but it was the weakest link in a chain of surprisingly strong and at times scintillating links. Indeed, it was very little more than a catalogue of famous names—names of producers, stars, plays and tunes. Many of these would no doubt bring a reminiscent sigh to the heart of a devotee who had heard them in the "good old days," but it seemed to me that the presentation didn't quite succeed in conjuring up the real spirit of musical-comedy—perhaps a few more singers and less talking might have helped. I came to the conclusion that musical-comedy relies on the actual and instant appeal of its stage settings, costumes, music, and all those tricks classed as "showmanship" to put it across, and that you can't really evoke it in retrospect without losing most of the glamour.

In Outer Space

[HAVE heard only one of the Science at Your Service series, "Beyond the Stratosphere" from 4YA, and found its



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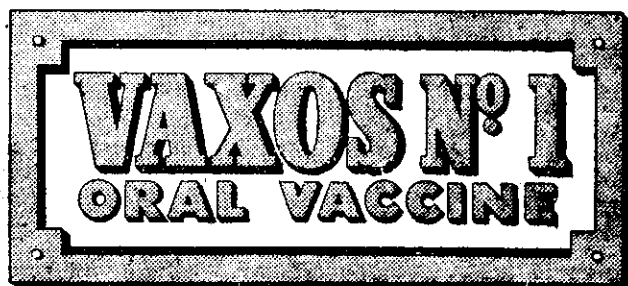
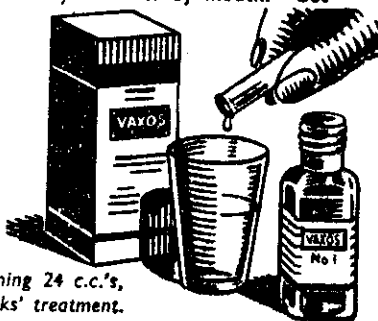
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