

acquaintance with three comedians who may claim to be the Grand Old Men of Comedy, in selections as traditional and be-whiskered as Father Christmas — Harry Tate on Motoring, and Clapham and Dwyer giving their "A for 'Orses" alphabet. And I have come to the conclusion that one cannot be dogmatic on the subject of whiskers. For whereas hirsute adornment sits ill upon the smooth surface of Clapham and Dwyer's wit it seems completely in keeping with the homely humour of Harry Tate, and when the j's of Motoring are in question I am not one to shout with Leslie Henson "Something new, something new!"

## Vernacular

"DITTIES from a Ditty-Box," a recording new to me, heard from 3YL, was a cheering contribution to one's knowledge of 20th Century folk-song. Since the course of modern civilisation has robbed the genuine and spontaneous thing of the opportunity to express the loftier emotions of mankind (the specialists here exert a monopoly) folk-song has been confined to the convivial and the ribald. As, moreover, the title of this recording indicates that it was of a naval character, the reader will not be surprised to learn that the odour of blue-pencil was at times overpowering. I fear that it is in vain to insert such words as "blighter"—the audience has caught on. But such songs—and these were worthy representatives of the great unrecorded-and-likely-to-remain-so mass—retain many sterling qualities: they are frequently funny and their honesty, good-fellowship, and complete lack of commercial hypocrisy uplift the heart.

## A, B, A, B, B, C, B, C . . .

"THE English Sonnet," with its melancholy memories of algebraic rhyme-schemes, was the theme of a BBC *Book of Verse* programme. The compiler confined himself principally to consideration of prosody, tracing the sonnet's evolution from the Petrarchan model to the Shakespearean, back via Milton to the Petrarchan again, in terms of rhyme, octave, and sestet. He did not speculate on the cause of these changes and was content to leave the Miltonic reaction, which abandoned the rhymed couplet closing the sonnet (that had been the distinctive English contribution to the original Italian) as an unexplained but regrettable fact. Nor did he deal with the evolution of subject-matter, from the amorous to the religious, to the patriotic, to the philosophical, to the religious again (there is rumoured to exist a long series by Wordsworth of "Ecclesiastical Sonnets"), in any but a summary manner. But the rigid insistence on the sonnet as existing only in its prosodical character had a certain austere grandeur. However, one is left to wonder whether there is not something else, harder to define, which singles out the spirit of the sonnet from other forms of verse, and what this may be.

## Infamous Woman

THE Case of Lady Tallond was heard from 4YA on a recent Sunday. This is a straightforward play by Norman Edwards, with good acting, especially by Fay Compton as the infamous murderess who kills her husband to marry his conniving valet. The story is very nasty indeed, and there is nothing to be said in extenuation of the crime; but it is put together in a way that keeps the

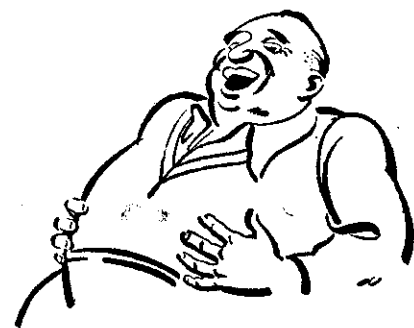
listeners in suspense throughout, not knowing whether Lady Tallond was or was not the author of the crime. Hearing this play for the first time, the listener might well imagine he was listening to the pleadings of wrongly-accused innocence, and the final few lines, where the acquitted woman many years later reveals her guilt by accident to her former defending counsel, would probably come as a surprise. But if the NZBS sends the play on its rounds again, the listener hearing it for the second time, as I did, will realise that the innocence of the young Lady Tallond is merely a mask. This was one occasion where a foreknowledge of the climax did not detract from enjoyment.

## Sheep-stealer

THE first broadcast from 4ZB of *Early Days in New Zealand* dealt with the discoverer of the tract of land known now as the Mackenzie Country. No listener who has visited that area of the South Island where one can see Mt. Cook, as the shepherd-hero of this story said, "upside down in a lake," would fail to be interested in the account of Mackenzie's life. But it was infuriating to find that many of the facts were crowded out to allow of advertising time, leaving only a rough sketch of Mackenzie, his slit-tongued dog, his Gaelic, and his sheep-stealing on the grand scale. With the story in mid-air, we were suddenly switched to another programme. The remainder of this particular story will no doubt be heard at a future date, but half the dramatic interest is lost by not allowing listeners to hear it all at one sitting.

## On Being Funny

AT 7.25 on Sunday nights from 1ZB there is a modest five minutes allotted to one, Professor Hornblow, whose act is programmed as a topical talk. Professor Hornblow's task is to interpret the lighter side of life. In short, he was to be funny. Now, being funny is both dangerous and difficult at any time; but on the air the would-be humorist has to have a very stout heart indeed. Left alone with the microphone, he cannot



tell how his jokes are going over. Our friend Hornblow's basic idea has many possibilities but, whether from inexperience in developing them, or just plain lack of imagination, he just misses fire. Attempting very laudably to make humorous comment on current affairs he has to fall back for the most part on wise-cracks faintly reminiscent of the music-hall comedian's stock-in-trade. Of course he has only five minutes, and one chuckle in that time might be considered a fair return. When he can make that chuckle last till Morning morning he will be getting somewhere. Five minutes, sometimes, can seem a very long time.

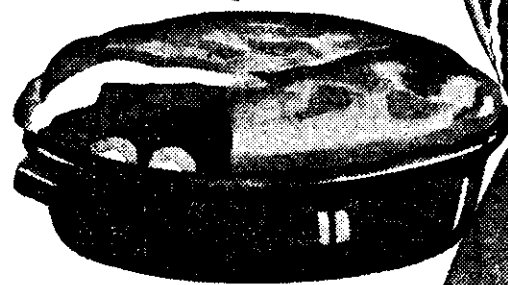
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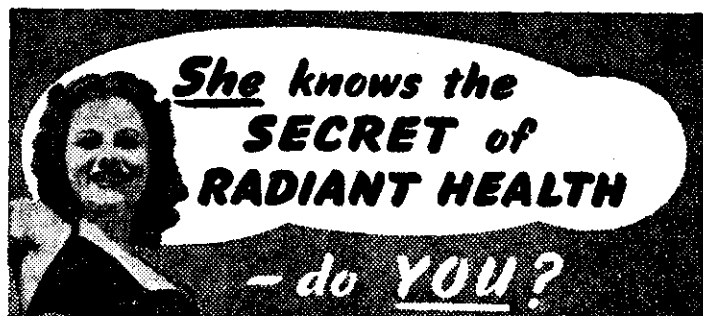
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