

on paper, the most impressive, consisting as it does of three minutes of some news broadcast or commentary which has now made history (the week before last we had the announcement of the fall of Warsaw). But the years have played such havoc with the recordings (cursed at birth by poor reception conditions) that any significance they may have is swallowed up in the irritation attending our efforts to decipher them.

Singing Sands

MISS MILDRED CABLE, one of a team of missionary-explorers now visiting New Zealand, spoke the other evening from 3YA of her experiences, and displayed at once the indefinable quality of modern explorers — Freya Stark, Bertram Thomas, even Peter Fleming, these have it too. It is an outlook entirely different from that of the 19th Century voyager who, when they did not insist on judging the new lands by the standards of their own society, retained indomitably the faculties of wonder and surprise. Not so the modern; Miss Cable, who distributes the Bible among Mongols, Kirghiz, and Uzbeks, has no sense of strangeness. In her voice is no more than a quiet naturalness, an acceptance of the flow of life as it passes before her eyes, in whatever landscapes, garments and ornaments, on whatever beasts, vehicles and roads, it may chance to go. The charm and importance of this to the listener is that the speaker imposes no attitudes or reactions upon him, but a calm objectivity which leaves him free to feel and think as he really wishes; respecting the life she describes, she respects the independence of judgment of her audience. Here, she says, is a way of life; think of it what you will. One begins to wonder whether Central Asian travel is not the last refuge of the individual; no false standards of romance and glamour bedevil his mind, but in an atmosphere of dry and ageless calm he can breathe freely, and look for the first time at what he sees, weighing and measuring it for what it is in a pure relation of observer and observed. But, no doubt, it is no longer so. A Soviet column rumbles along the northern horizon, on its way to present collectivist standards to the Mongol; and the south-east sky is uneasy with Mustangs, ensuring the freedom of Uzbek individualism. Everywhere the importance of commercial systems and ideologies beats at the citadel of the mind.

The Highwayman

OWING to an excessively dramatic concert-platform version of Alfred Noyes' *Highwayman* which I was once forced to live through, I have tended to look the other way whenever this gentleman goes by. But I am now beginning to look upon him with a less bloodshot eye, thanks first of all to A. D. Priestley, whose reading of the poem in a Friday Correspondence School session sent a shiver even through my inoculated spine, and probably resulted in an increased demand for nightlights in backblocks nurseries. And the last of my unfortunate memories were driven out when I heard the Wellington Training College Choral Society singing Armstrong Gibb's version of *The Highwayman*, a work which seems to me to recreate even more forcibly the emotional surge of the original.

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