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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

China Calling

CHRISTCHURCH has recently been visited by James Bertram, CORSO organiser, and has exacted from him the somewhat hair-raising price of three public lectures in two days and a 3YA broadcast on the third. In return, however, we are able to pay a tribute to one of the most remarkable personalities of contemporary New Zealand and, in a curious way, one of the most important. It is not merely that he speaks, as he writes, with a directness and sincerity that assure him definite and lasting influence whenever he cares to exercise it; there is, besides, a definite value for the isolation-conscious New Zealander in hearing from one who has seen and worked in such momentous occasions, and left on them a visible and individual mark. To this small and self-aware community a native working and adventuring abroad seems to carry some part of its own developing personality as it struggles towards existence. Therefore to hear Mr. Bertram has a significance apart from his message; but it must not be thought that his message and his cause take any place but the first with him and his listeners. He told us what we had not known before, that the ship which brought him back last year from Japan landed him in Lyttelton, so that he spent his first day in New Zealand after eight years of war and captivity wandering along the Avon and looking at the city and the country, checking it up mentally against the cities most recent in his experience. "There wasn't much left of Tokyo and what was left of Manila was rather a mess... There had been too many corpses, corpses in the river at Shanghai, corpses in Tokyo Bay..." Mr. Bertram's method of serving his cause is to make us partakers of his own experience and realise the ultimate unity of all human conditions and fortunes.

The Spacious Days

THE Reverend Charles Kingsley, even had he not tried to imitate Rabelais in certain passages of *The Water Babies*, has much to answer for. Not the least of his transgressions is that exciting but tendentious work, *Westward Ho!* Chesterton's view of this book is simple: "Even if it is mostly a lie, it is a good, thundering honest lie." There is perhaps no need to go as far as that. Its worst sin seems to be the over-coloured, over-compressed picture of the 1580's which is fixed on the minds of infant readers—a vague feeling that the Elizabethans all knew each other and went about in a body, doing and saying the same things. Much of this persisted in a serial broadcast to schools which I came across the other day, entitled, "In the Days of Gloriana" by Isobel Andrews. In this tale, Francis Drake, having left the presence of his sovereign, is conducted by a friend to the doors of the Mermaid Tavern. At this point I trembled, fearing that anachronistic encounters might be made within. It would not be above some purveyors of Tudor glamour to have the redoubtable captain attentive to Master William Shakespeare reciting passages from his new play—the first of which was produced three years at the least after the Armada and more years

after the voyage of circumnavigation. However, Isobel Andrews wisely abstained and showed considerable historical acumen. It was with great difficulty that her Drake was persuaded within the Mermaid doors, declaring loudly his aversion to poetry and to all reading except the Bible; so when Mrs. Andrews's juvenile hearers are told in later life that Puritanism first took root



in the trading and seafaring classes, this information will have some meaning for them. But the practice I complain against is that of taking the leading men, places, topics and pursuits of the Elizabethan age and showing them all in intimate day-to-day relation: Drake and Grenville, for instance, as regular visitors to Court; the Mermaid Tavern, that haunt of the intelligentsia, as a rendezvous for everyone ever heard of in the whole reign. This sort of thing is very common and remarkably insidious; it may be not for years, if ever, that even the assiduous scholar will be able to get some picture of what the Elizabethan age was really like.

Hit and Miss

I HAVE been following 2ZB's Hit Parade for some weeks now and am at a loss to understand why half-an-hour of listening to the World's Top Voices and the World's Top Bands in the World's Top Tunes should make me feel low. This is not entirely due to the prevailing melancholy of the numbers, for to do the session justice, not more than half the lyrics yearn ineffectually. It may have something to do with the fact that the parade takes the form of a relentless progression from bottom to top. One is not surprised that Number Eight should be a little on the paltry side (the other day it was Pickle in the Middle and dealt with the composition of a sandwich) but when Number Eight is succeeded by seven others, each of them in turn seemingly lacking in the audience-impact necessary before they can be termed hits, one begins to question the necessity for the session. Top Tune last week was Irving Berlin's "Doing What Comes Naturally" which Dinah Shore, with superb artistry, manages to sing as if it had never been purged of the improprieties which made it famous.

And Yet You Incessantly Stand on Your Head

IF you would experience the emotions aroused by tragedy as defined by Aristotle—if you would behold the sudden descent of a great man into misery and indignity and feel your spirit purged by