

terror and pity—you would not expect your desires to be satisfied by a recording announced as "Vive L'amour" sung by Lauritz Melchior. But if you listened closely you would drain the tragic experience to its dregs. For Herr Melchior is a Wagnerian tenor of credit and renown, and "Vive L'amour" is an ultra-hearty, uncompromisingly English drinking-song. So Herr Melchior, whose English accent is not above reproach or even the jeers of the vulgar, sings this ditty with chorus and solemnly ploughs through "Let ever" goo-ood fellow now feel op his glass" and the rest of it; which operation being carried out the chorus starts vive l'amouring in a hearty bawl, and away above the clamour, as brazen as trumpets from the topmost keep of a mist-enwrapped castle above the Rhine, and as out of place as Leviathan taking his pastime among a drove of performing penguins, goes the tremendous Wagnerian tenor. It is an awesome business, and a peculiarly painful one. I hasten to add that I have nothing against Herr Melchior's inability to speak English in the native garb; but there is a subtle yet immeasurable difference between the drinking-songs popular in the Hall of the Nibelungen and those favoured in The Old Bull and Bush, which this exploit does nothing to mend. My film-going friends tell me he appeared recently in a Hollywood success singing "Please Don't Say No." And when he next doth ride abroad, may I be there to see.

It's an Ill Wind

THOSE who heard the 4YA String Orchestra on a recent Sunday afternoon would regret to hear that it will lose some members to the National Symphony Orchestra; two wood-wind players from Dunedin are going north, and while feeling proud that they should be selected, Dunedin listeners must regret the gap there will be in Dunedin's orchestral talent. The Sunday programme, consisting only of two works, was of more than ordinary interest. The first composition, Theme and Variations for String Orchestra, was by Frank Callaway, who is Director of Music at the Technical College in Dunedin. In this finely-finished work Mr. Callaway proved himself completely at home with strings; the composition has an atmosphere of solemn beauty which places it high among music by New Zealanders. It was awarded the Philip Neill Memorial Prize for 1946, the third presentation of this award. Second on the programme was the Concerto for Oboe and Strings by Gordon Jacob. This composer, whose lighter efforts are known to most BBC listeners, has here excelled himself as a serious composer, and the difficult and intricate oboe part of the concerto must present great obstacles to any but a skilled performer. However, Frank Robb, in a polished performance of the solo part, demonstrated conclusively the reasons for his inclusion in the National Orchestra.

The Man of Abbotsford

"THE Author of Waverley," the BBC's half-hour programme on the life of Scott, is good hearing. It has no narrator, a device from which occasional relief is no bad thing—but the characters and conversations which unfold the story are natural and credible, something exceedingly difficult to attain when two gentlemen have in the course of a casual exchange to make quite plain who they

are, what are their pursuits and interests, and what has recently happened to them. All this, moreover, in the broadest of Lowland Scots. However, the lucid formality of conversation in the age of real education in which Sir Walter lived enabled the author to get over that difficulty without galling his reader with his characters' pomposity towards one another or their patronisingly laborious and oblique explanations towards himself. The theme was Scott's two descents into acute financial embarrassment, brought upon him by the fecklessness of his partners, and the way in which he turned to novel-writing and wrote himself out of bankruptcy. It was a personal story; though advertised as "The Story of a Literary Genius" it was rather the heroic persistence of the man which we were called on to admire. Of his literary qualities, one was impressed mainly with the strength of regional character in him, the intense and vivid relation he had with the soil and rivers and place-names of his own Lowland country; and it was, of course, in the bringing of these to life and their incarnation in living characters that Scott's greatness consisted. One puzzle remains from the broadcast: if the identity of "The Author of Waverley" was kept so long a secret, why was Scott being visited by peripatetic American literary gentlemen and granted a baronetcy by the Prince Regent and so forth? Can it have been on the strength of his poems?

Dukeses and Duchesses

SERIALS, and more especially historical serials, and most especially serials broadcast at 10.45 on alternate mornings, do not, it must be confessed, provide the Viewsreel commentator with much of his weekly material; and I must confess that 3YA's current saga, of a length which should commend it to Scheherazade (not perhaps typical of listeners to *For My Lady* sessions) and entitled "The Amazing Duchess," has not somehow come my way for several months. But I can now announce my conversion to become a regular and palpitating fan. The reason for this change of heart is a casual encounter with a back number of *Time and Tide* which contains the true story of that redoubtable 18th Century lady, Elizabeth Chudleigh. I knew vaguely that her adventures had landed her on trial before the House of Lords, but I had not yet realised that the charge was of marrying the Duke of Kingston while the Earl of Bristol, to whom she had been secretly married for some years, was still remotely but not ineffectually alive. In real life, as far as I can make out, she lost the Duke's name, as an outcome of the trial, but kept his money, and died in 1788 a boon companion of Catherine the Great, having selected Russia as a congenial retreat for her declining years. What the compilers of *For My Lady* programmes will make of this blue-blooded scallywagery I can hardly wait to find out. I should like, too, to have heard more of the earlier episodes, to see just how many of Elizabeth's earlier recorded enterprises had made the ether. There are some good stories among them. Unkind gossip putting it about that she had become the mother of twins, she complained to Lord Chesterfield. Lord Chesterfield: "Madam, I make a point of never believing more than half I hear."

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