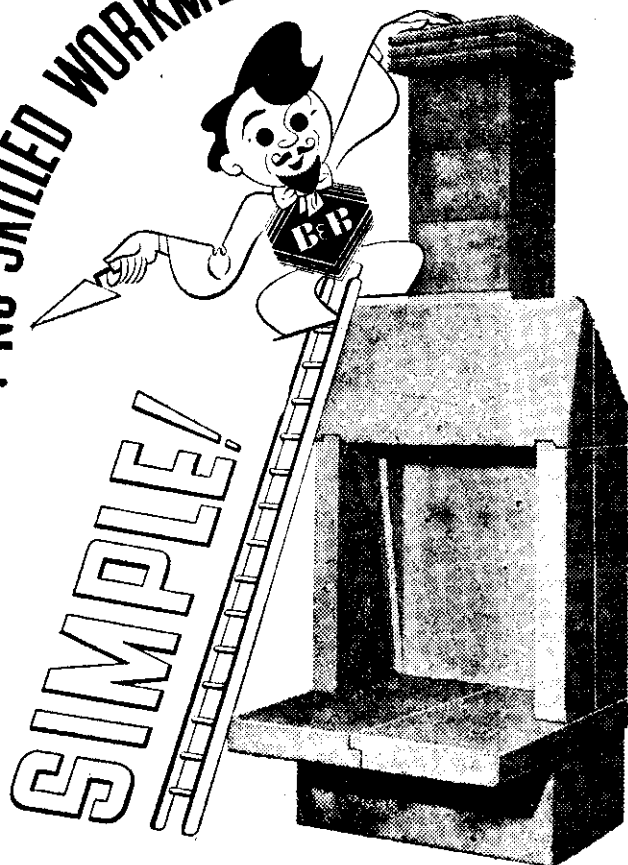


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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Road to Samarkand

THE closing scene of *Hassan* — the music of Delius to Flecker's semi-poetic drama—was recently broadcast by 3YA. It was an affair of choir, tenor, Philharmonic, and Beecham, and pleasing enough to the ear, though both Flecker and Delius tempt us to regard them as the last embers of the romantic inspiration; but it raises, of course, all the old headaches about co-operation between the arts. Flecker wrote the last scene of *Hassan* to evoke a certain mood—"Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells Where shadows pass gigantic on the sand And softly through the silence beat the bells Along the golden road to Samarkand." It is permissible to wonder how clearly Flecker decided whether he was writing these words to be read or to be spoken from the stage, but the latter has been done and done successfully. At any rate, Flecker achieved his aim of evocation by writing these words; they, alone and unsupported, convey the poet's meaning. Now the problem is: by bringing in another artist working in another medium, and by presenting Flecker's words together with Delius' music (and sung, to boot) are we not confusing the arts, setting two to do what either might perform more adequately alone? "And softly through the silence beat the bells" conveys a definite mental picture; can we legitimately play music with exactly the same intention, while these words are being spoken?

Off the Beeton Track

AFTER hearing "Early Ramblings in Nutrition" on a recent Friday I am prepared, in this case at least, to withdraw my previous statement that A.C.E. talks are dull. This one developed a new angle on a familiar subject. In neither manner nor matter did it ramble—it gave a succinct and entertaining account of the somewhat haphazard development of what is now the science of nutrition, beginning with the Romans, for whom A, B, C, and D meant merely Aulus, Balbus, Caius and Decius, and coming down to Sir John Boyd Orr, who now learns his ABC down to the letter P. And whereas previous A.C.E. talks have sounded like readings from Cranford, long in cold storage, this particular one was delivered with the pride and despatch of a housewife turning out her last batch of scones. And so lost was the speaker to all sense of the academic that she even managed to put a lift into that familiar last line, "This talk was prepared and issued..." and made it sound like a Noel Coward curtain instead of an epitaph.

The Slipper Fits

IF I complain about the unmannerly noises that crackle round the knob every time I turn to 1YX—perhaps I exaggerate; say every second time—I must in fairness give praise for the arrangements of the programmes that do their best to be heard above these noises. It delights me to be able to settle down to an evening of music by French composers, presented in order with dates attached; or to listen for an hour to a fair division of works by two

composers; or best of all to have the prospect of hearing, one by one each week on Thursdays, the late quartets of Beethoven. There are the off nights, of course; but on the whole I can be fairly sure that while 1YA and 12M are away at the Town Hall watching the boxing or listening to the bands, little Cinderella will be sitting at home coping with the static in the flues or unravelling the wave-lengths on the hearth in the effort to give us an hour of chamber music or two hours of carefully chosen symphonic music.

1666 and All That

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN was billed as the subject of a BBC broadcast entitled *English Architects*. The theme was good, but the treatment unfortunate. The conversations, carried on in strange and unnatural accents, were of the self-conscious, glib, echoingly unreal kind invariably conducted between historical personages in these affairs. Thus



King Charles II, surveying the ruins of London after the Great Fire: "But I swear that from these ruins a better, cleaner and more healthy city shall arise!" The thought and the idiom are largely anachronistic and the attempt at characterisation so stilted and inept that it really is not possible to believe it exists. The author of a famous poem about Wren has another in which, after remarking that Lord Clive is no longer alive, he adds: "There is a great deal to be said for being dead." Just so, historical characters should be treated with realism and respect or left undramatised. The best feature of the programme was the vivid hint it gave of the intellectual life of the late 17th Century, an age before the specialisation of learning in which the same splendid amateur could be anatomist and architect, another physicist, and admiral, a third "in the course of one revolving moon War statesman, chemist, rhymist and buffoon," when the natural and applied sciences played happily together and "in his majesty's reign warships were for the first time constructed on philosophical principles."

The Atom Explodes

THE other night from 2YA I heard the BBC feature "The Atom Explodes," by Nesta Pain, and speaking as one of those average non-scientific listeners at whom Miss Pain is said to direct her projectiles (we are eagerly awaiting bombardment by The Tsetse Fly and Sleeping Sickness) I feel that Miss Pain's talents as a script-writer have not been over-rated. Few programmes attempt to hold their audience for more than 30 minutes. "The Atom Explodes" held me for 45 minutes which seemed like a mere half-hour. The fact that a scientific programme can be