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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Maori Battalion

CONSIDERING the difficulties of time, place, and opportunity for making such records, it is surprising that the half-hour of "The Maori Battalion in Song" resulted in such a cohesive effort. These performances were mainly recorded in the Middle East under conditions of heat and cramped quarters which would scarcely appeal to singers wishing to give of their best; but the traditional pride of the Maori in his singing is evidenced here in the full-throated choral singing. For the returned men of the Battalion this programme will bring poignant memories; for relatives and friends it is no less interesting as a memento of Egypt and Italy. The majority of songs recorded are well enough known to those listeners who though special and appropriate words have ever attended a Maori concert, although some have been added to some of them; but the authentic spirit of the Maori Battalion was surely contained in the first item, the haka. The narrator explained that this was recorded in the desert, at night, by the light of a solitary lantern. Even a second-hand hearing by means of recordings made it plain that the participants were giving it everything they had: heard under the original conditions, I can imagine nothing more startlingly bloodcurdling.

### Running on Water

A RECENT episode of *Passing Parade* dealt with the question "Can Water Be Used As Fuel?" I wonder if the process described here, of filling your petrol tank with water, dropping in a pellet of the Secret Formula, and starting up the engine, is really so feasible as "popular" science might suggest? Heard on the radio, it sounded so very easy. Apparently someone demonstrated it to the satisfaction of the Navies of Britain and the U.S.A., and it seems it was rumoured to have been used by the Nazis after their fuel supplies had run out. So simple—just a little pellet! Although stranger things by far have happened within my own lifetime, I am by nature sceptical, and I was not surprised to hear, at the end of the episode, the "voice of conservative science" telling us that water just can't be used as fuel, and that even Professor Dunning's discovery of U235 is not the final answer to *Passing Parade's* dream of petrol-bowlers dispensing water at 2/7 a gallon.

### "Lavengro"

MY first-hand knowledge of George Borrow's works is slight, and so I was unprepared for the spate of rip-roaring, full-blooded drama into which I was plunged when I listened to "Lavengro" from 2YA the other Friday. The fight with the Flaming Tinman and its romantic aftermath, the unrelenting enmity of Herne, and the episode of the poisoned cake—these can compete in dramatic intensity with incidents from any serial now holding the air. And Borrow's prose has a fine rotundity which makes it particularly suitable for reading aloud. Phrases such as "She gave me a look of the deepest malignity" appear unremarkable in print, but can sound shuddersome over the air. The programme was, in short, an excellent

one. Not only was it in itself good entertainment, but it should succeed in what is presumably the purpose of these literary studies—to lure us back to the originals.

### So, Therefore, Quirites . . .

RICHARD SINGER, whose talks on *Famous Figures of the Bar* are being heard from 3YA, made for a recent one the unexpected choice of Cicero. Certainly the practice of the Roman law courts would provide a rich harvest of that type of anecdote which enriches the life of the legal profession. It was customary, for instance, for prosecuting counsel to launch upon the most savage and detailed interpretation of the accused man's private



morals, even though these had nothing whatever to do with the case. "From his earliest youth he showed signs of the vilest and most unnatural forms of depravity and since that time he has

steadily degenerated" was a familiar opening. The joke is that the accused was expected to take all this in good part; it was a regular part of forensic proceedings and to treat it seriously or show signs of resentment was simply not done. You came into court with your head bowed and brought your family wearing full mourning, to move the hearts of the judges; your political friends stood around in large numbers, looking militant; and as a general rule you were either acquitted or sent into exile. This might be no hardship; a notorious political gangster whom Cicero had been briefed to defend on a charge of murder, but had been frightened out of assisting, wrote subsequently: "I have been reading the speech you were to have delivered on my behalf and greatly admire it. However, I am quite glad it was not spoken, for it would have assuredly secured my acquittal and I should never have found how good the mullet at Marseilles taste." All this, of course, represents only the political aspect of legal life; to judge Roman law by it would be to criticise the work of Justice Holmes by the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

### Nightmares

WRITERS of stories and plays which rely for effect on the ghostly, the macabre, the fantastic, are up against a tricky problem. If they lay it on too thickly, their tales are not even momentarily authentic; if they don't lay it on thickly enough, they fail to arouse the listener's imagination and the story loses its kick. Victor Andrews, who wrote the NZBS production, *The Man Who Could Make Nightmares*, has succeeded in walking the tightrope between these two abysses of failure. His grisly play is an undoubted success, mainly because he knows the exact value of understatement. His "little man" has the horrible faculty of being able to project a nightmare into someone else's sleeping brain; and does so with cumulative effect right through the play, blackmailing himself right into the upper-income bracket of big business. The nightmares are partly

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IT SPREADS DISEASE—**

**TUBERCULOSIS and other  
GERMS, for instance, when  
deposited on footpaths in  
this way, may survive a long  
time, and when dry are  
picked up by draughts.**

**Passing feet may also be  
contaminated.**

**Think twice before you spit  
—AND THEN DON'T!**



Issued by the Dept. of Health.

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