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What Our Commentators Say

Unnerving

I FIND 22B's Tuesday night *Popular Fallacies* session much more unnerving than anything of the It Walks By Night variety. Moreover it is heard at 6.30, a time when the whole family is likely to be doing its dinner-time listening. Nothing more unsettling for the children to go to bed on can well be imagined, since it brings into question beliefs on the truth of which they have perhaps depended. Last Monday, for example, we started off by learning that a forest need not necessarily have trees in it, a supposition likely to play havoc with their ideas on *The Babes in the Wood* or *The Sleeping Beauty*. There was also something for Mother and Father to like awake over in the session's exposure of a popular fallacy in regard to insurance, learned judge expounding the "average clause," thereby showing that though you may fallaciously believe your house and chattels to be fully insured they seldom are. The only fallacy that no one in the family minded was the one about not being allowed to touch a dead body till the police arrives. To quote the announcer: "You can mess the clues up all you like and the police won't mind a bit." However he didn't sound nearly as sincere as when expounding that average clause. I await next week's session with the eagerness of a knowingly doomed candidate for his examination results.

Machine-Made Thrills

HITHERTO Captain Charles Sturt has been to me merely a stern though unwhiskered face remembered from a school atlas, but since the first broadcast of the new Sunday morning series from 2YA *Into the Unknown*—Sturt a voice equally stern but somewhat suggestive of whiskers has been added. No glimpse has yet been afforded of the man himself, though perhaps this would be too much to expect of a programme that concentrates on the going rather than on the man who goes. But so far *Into the Unknown* has proved an unworthy successor to *Travellers' Tales* and even to *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. The treatment is stereotyped, a mere progression from one new landmark to the next, and lest the discovery of a mighty river or a vast inland lake should exalt the discoverers unduly, each new occasion for rejoicing is smartly followed by its corresponding misfortune. Thus immediately after Burt's proud naming of the Murray River, Doctor Brown (who performs the function of chorus) announces that stores are dangerously low, and immediately after the episode of Lake Alexandrina, he again rushes on to announce that hostile natives have made off with the few remaining. History may bear out the scriptwriter's thesis that Sturt was "the unluckiest explorer who ever pushed back the frontiers of Australia," but the repeated, almost rhythmic, blows of fate coupled with the reiteration of phrases such as "only a miracle can save us" smack so strongly of the usual radio serial that the real-life drama passes us by. We, in fact, feel no compunction and little interest when our session closes with Sturt and his sturdy band in the middle of drought-bound country, surrounded by cannibals, without food, and weakened by scurvy.

The Rest is Silence

ALDOUS HUXLEY'S book *The Perennial Philosophy* has been my holiday reading, and I find it impossible to refrain from quoting from a certain chapter, headed simply "Silence." Huxley says: "The 20th Century is, among other things, the Age of Noise . . . That most popular and influential of all recent inventions, the radio, is nothing but a conduit through which



pre-fabricated din can flow into our homes. And this din goes far deeper, of course, than the ear-drums. It penetrates the mind, filling it with a babel of distractions—news items, mutually irrelevant bits of information, blasts of corymbantic or sentimental music, continually repeated doses of drama that bring no catharsis, but merely create a craving for daily or even hourly emotional enemas. And where, as in most countries, the broadcasting stations support themselves by selling time to advertisers . . . But perhaps it would be better to stop the quotation there; let the listener who values his quota of spiritual quietude discover the book and read the rest for himself.

Captain Cook's Country

I HEARD both Mrs. Marsh's Saturday morning talks from 2YA, but was conscious throughout that I did not feel the same passionate interest in the subject as she did. This was perhaps natural since *Captain Cook's Home Country* is also Mrs. Marsh's. A New Zealander, on the other hand, can't help feeling that the country James Cook ran away from at a comparatively early age is less interesting than the countries he ran away to discover. But if the content of Mrs. Marsh's first talk seemed scarcely to measure up to the extreme brightness of her manner, the promises of treats to come with which she concluded it were made good in the second talk. And this time, I think, she did convey something of the historic and geographic excitement of that part of Yorkshire, the coastline which boasts England's only volcano, and whose alum mine earned a Pope's curse, the land through which Henry VIII. rode to visit Catherine Parr.

Wagging a Flag in a Good Cause

DID Elgar have a warped sense of humour or did he really believe that "Land of Hope and Glory" was great music? Did the composer of the "Internationale" see himself sitting next to Beethoven in Elysium? Of all the flag-wagging, or up-and-at-'em songs, the "Marseillaise" is still the most inspiring and the best of music, but "Ballad for

(continued on next page)