

been to. So I settled down to listen to 3YA's Sunday evening play, *I Am Invited In*, already prepared with my best spinal shudder. I was expecting the worst. "She Heard Feet on the Stairs," the programme told us, "And a Voice in the Room" (which might have been a Voice from the Prompt-Corner but wasn't), "And She Listened." I listened too. It seemed rather a mean trick when the prompt followed the leading lady into the back of the car, but that was because I thought I knew already just what was going to happen. But I was wrong—the end came suddenly and unexpectedly and left us all gasping; we had our mouths open already, we were so agog to find out whether the author was going to Reveal All or leave us suspended in mid-air. He did neither; he dropped us. One question that did strike me rather forcibly, however, is the difficulty of dealing with the supernatural voice, particularly in a play of that length, where there is not much time for the audience to get used to it. Making it sound like an over-efficient prompt seems to be the only way out; but the fainter and farther away the better, even if it does sound like something from a death-bed scene.

Confidence-Shaker

POPULAR FALLACIES is harsh in its dealings with our cherished beliefs. Although most of us imagine our knowledge to be exact and unshakable, in reality there are few of us who don't cling to some fallacious piece of information for the veracity of which we would unhesitatingly vouch. I have heard it firmly stated, by people who ought to know better, that cats carry diphtheria, that it is dangerously unlucky to pick may-blossom, that you can get a fire to draw simply by placing a poker in front of the bars of your grate, and various other inanities too numerous to mention. *Popular Fallacies* wouldn't concern itself with such puerilities, but concentrates on sterner stuff, telling us how to behave after the murder, whether our insurance policy is foolproof, whether our first edition with the uncut edges is really as valuable as we imagined, and so on. The only thing I have against this otherwise admirable programme is the fact that, after hearing it once or twice, the listener is apt to acquire a permanently soured disposition, having discovered too often that things are never quite as trustworthy as they seem.

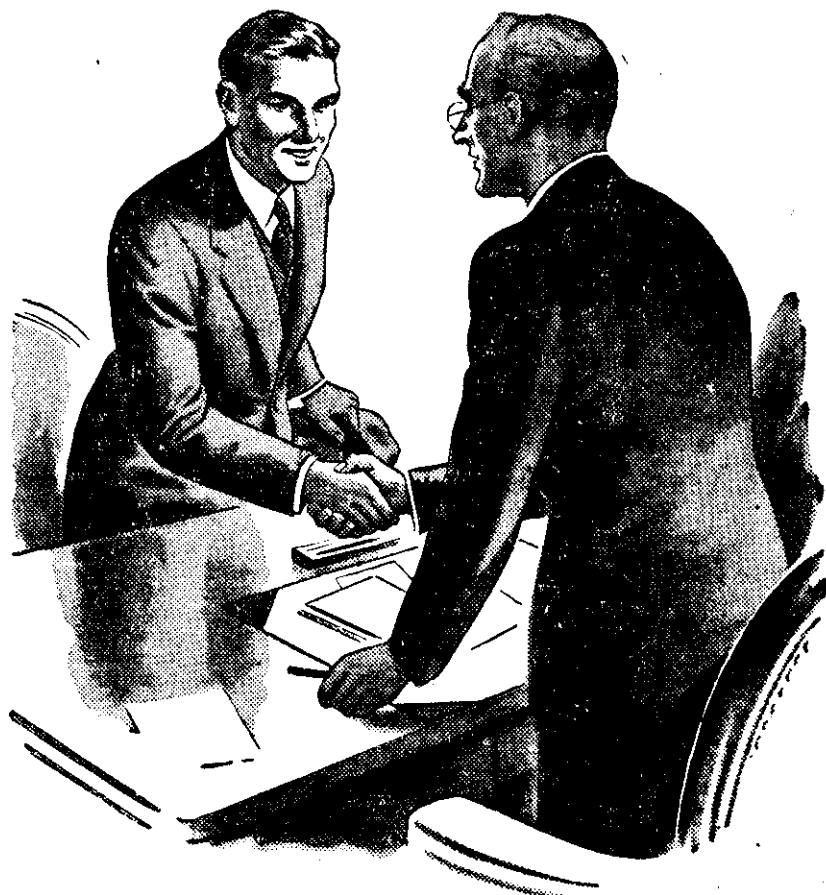
Meat in the Diet

COMMENTATORS in the BBC *Listener* have been complaining lately of too much meat in the programmes, and the impossibility of hearing, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting all but a small portion of it. One complains "The exhausted critic reaches the week's end like a harassed parent at the railway station—Gissing, Shaw, Tennyson, Marlowe, Saroyan, Chekhov. . . ." Another writer lists the subjects for the week's talks, "The Romans in Britain, social philosophy, elephant-keeping, poets, poetry and the art of translating poetry, the art of Rodin, the art of chimney-sweeping, the art of children, the art of the symphony, exploration—these were only a few of the subjects aired last week. . . ." Overfed? Looking over the Dunedin programmes lately in a search for something new to write about, I can't help feeling that intelligent listeners here are being given, in comparison, a starvation diet. It is true that, in exchange,

as it were, for our food-parcels to Britain, we have a good proportion of imported BBC programmes to liven our diet. But why should it be necessary to import our culture? It cannot be argued that with our smaller population we shouldn't expect as much in the way of intellectual fare as the British listeners get. This is false reasoning—it is proportion which counts. And, in proportion to our population, we have surely as high a percentage of poets, writers, musicians, teachers, good speakers, and intelligent listeners as any other country. We should therefore expect a comparable proportion of intelligent broadcasts in our programmes. Cannot the brains of our intelligentsia be used to raise the standard of our serious broadcasts, and to provide more of them?

Exit, Pursued by a Bing

AS far as can be seen at the moment, this is the last Viewsreel paragraph that this commentator will write. It's been fun for over two years, but now that the moment has come to hand over, perhaps the editor and public will excuse me if I follow the hackneyed example of countless retiring commentators and critics, and fire off a few broadsides of opinion. The thing that has struck me most is that more than 50 per cent. of any station's broadcasting time must go to popular music; and all popular music, without significant exception, has one subject. This seems to me deplorable—not because it is sentimental (though it is) or tasteless (though it is), or commercial (though it is), but because it forces on large numbers of young people the choice between accepting false and silly standards of a very important matter, or revolting against the whole topic and putting it out of their minds; in either case not helping the development of their emotional lives. On the other hand, genuine popular music or latter-day folklore, as an anthropological exercise and for sheer entertainment, brings the regular listener great rewards. After two years' listening what changes would I most like to see? Greater variety of recordings, whether by increased importations or by a bolder policy as regards repetition. It is very seldom, for instance, that I hear a humorous record which I have not heard many times before (this without exaggeration). More "live" talks and symposia by the numerous people living in each centre quite qualified to give them; talks on world and national affairs; arguments and discussions; critical commentaries on books, plays, recitals, and (why not?) broadcast material itself. Less fear of being thought intellectual; less talking down; more giving people a chance to appreciate difficult, unusual or subtle things. Finally, less music. I am convinced that programmes could be broader and more various, and that this would be a shrewd blow at that maggot in the apple, the background listener. These things are dreams. There are innumerable practical difficulties. But if the fear of the good were overcome: if it were realised that to stimulate and challenge the public is always more rewarding than to dope them (more rewarding and more fun; we need not be uplift merchants); if the radio were used for its true purpose, to awake and feed the public imagination—a lot of these difficulties could be overcome. Much of what is best in New Zealand culture has been won by cheerful and insolent attempting of the impossible. We could use new life.



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