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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Is Robin Hood Awake?

IN *Sherwood*, Sir Alfred Noyes expresses doubts as to whether Robin Hood is still around or no, but radio's constant listeners know Robin, particularly in his Basil Rathbone incarnation, as an old soldier. Last Sunday in place of the ZB Gazette, 2ZB listeners had half-an-hour of good blood-and-thunder *Sherwood* forestry, at the end of which Robin Hood was forced to belie his traditional modesty of character and betray the age of the feature by pointing himself out as one of the first to fight for freedom, and urging us to do the same. Fortunately we have won the war by other means, for it is difficult to see just what lessons, moral or material, we can learn from the adventures of Robin Hood. No, we must regard the moral as being as extraneous as those favoured by the Duchess, and enjoy the story regardless. And any attempt to see the characters in terms of modern life is doomed to failure. No modern maid could be half so coy as Maid Marian, no modern hero half so insouciant as Robin. On the other hand the group sentiments are pure 20th Century Rotary, and the choruses and solos ("Hey, Robin, Jolly Robin," "Ho, Jolly Jenkins," "Greensleeves"), are obviously rendered by those nurtured in the hearty traditions of the glee-clubs of the 1930's.

The Fitness of Things

I SUPPOSE if you are a programme arranger and have, right at the beginning, constructed seven programme moulds, one for each day of the week, you are naturally going to use them as much as possible. They have advantages. The ingredients for each day's radio fare can be prepared well in advance, placed in cold storage, and turned out ready for consumption on the appointed day. The consumers probably like things this way, just as guests of long standing in the boarding-house who are used to boiled mutton on Wednesdays would feel a certain sense of insecurity if, instead, smoked fish presented itself. But even the most barnacle-encrusted habitué would feel aggrieved if boiled mutton were served on Christmas Day, because it also happened to be Wednesday, and would consider his landlady at worst, a heathen, and at best one lacking a sense of fitness. The same could be said of those who organised the Easter programmes, particularly the programmes heard from the commercial stations. Because from 2ZB on Fridays we are accustomed to hearing *She Follows Me About*, *Nick Carter*, and the *Drama of Medicine* (enclosed in the usual commercials) does not mean that on Good Friday we will be satisfied with the same cold collation, with extraneous garnishing of so-called Easter Music. This was clearly a case where the usual programme should have been dispensed with, and something more suggestive of bitter herbs substituted.

Dickens and Music

I HAVE listened to two programmes of *Dickens and Music* from 2YD on Monday nights (signature tune "Greensleeves"), and there are two questions I ask myself—first, what began it, and

second, where will it all end? To ponder the second question first, there seems no reason why this type of session should not start a whole cycle of radio programmes. There are dozens of reputable authors, and the probability is that each mentions music several times per novel and sometimes oftener. Dickens's Harold Skimpole plays the piano, so we spend a couple of minutes listening to someone playing the piano as Skimpole might have played it. Very well, then, let Galsworthy's Irene or H. E. Bates's Catherine Foster have a turn. And if we want a violin solo why not have Yehudi Menuhin doubling for Sherlock Holmes, thus capturing a double audience? And music and sweet poetry proverbially agree even better than music and sweet prose. Shakespeare is a sitting bird for any script-writer, and a programme of Music and Tennyson — "Music as the Lotus-Eaters Heard It"—would be welcome as a late evening session. The first question permits of even wider conjecture. My favourite conjecture is *Seven Script-Writers in Search of a Subject*, and my comment would be similar to Algernon's on Jack's appearance in *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "I never saw anyone take so long to dress, and with so little result." However, the session has its moments: we are wiser through knowing that "For England, Home and Beauty" is a phrase from the contemporary ballad *The Death of Nelson* (rhyming naturally with "duty"), and through having heard *The Ratcatcher's Daughter*, a ballad whose macabre cheerfulness seems appropriately Dickensian.

Menace

MONEY WITH MENACES from 4ZB was a play about kidnapping. No, don't stop reading—this was a kidnapping with a difference. It began with a mysterious 'phone call to a businessman's office, the unknown informant telling him that his little daughter had been kidnapped. Entering into the quaking shoes of the victimised father, the listener followed him through a maze of situations in his endeavours to get in touch with the kidnappers, pay the ransom, and get his child back. He never did succeed in doing this, for a very unobvious reason which shall not be disclosed here, since I hope readers will hear this play sometimes. But the tension of the ever-mounting suspense, and the increasing agony of the father in his frustrated attempts to come to grips with an adversary who to the end remains nothing but a voice on the telephone, are grimly told in a manner reminiscent of that spine-chilling story "The Torture by Hope" (which title might well have been stolen for this very play). *Money With Menaces* was produced by the NZBS, and very well produced, too.

Drama

THERE has been a sad dearth of plays for Christchurch listeners recently, and a (consequent?) increase in the output of the more smoothly, more un-

