

Louis Stevenson. Like all Val Lewton productions, it has a literary quality seldom encountered in even the best Hollywood films and virtually unknown in shockers. Who else but Val Lewton would cap what is probably the most hair-raising finale in movie history with a Greek quotation—and do it without seeming precious?

The setting is Edinburgh, the date 1831, and the story concerns the brilliant but haunted head of a medical school (Henry Daniell), his promising young pupil (Russell Wade), and their grisly dealings with a "resurrectionist" (Boris Karloff) who does not stop at murder if he finds it difficult to supply the school with a corpse for dissection by the more orthodox (though of course still unpopular) method of grave-robbery. This theme is, obviously, a parallel with Burke and Hare; yet though reference is frequently made in the film to that notorious pair, the producer does not go out of his way to explain who they were; he pays his audience the compliment of assuming that they will know already.

The atmosphere in which the ghastly chronicle develops is so well sustained, so exact in its detail, that the story, one feels, is true of both period and place; and that it is true also of human nature. Even the loathsome body-snatcher himself seems a very real person—at least while the picture lasts; and the tortured Dr. Macfarlane certainly does. Henry Daniell's performance is a masterly dissection of a complex personality, repellent yet fascinating.

This sincere and enlightened treatment means, naturally, that *The Body Snatcher* is much more leisurely in its narrative and less obviously melodramatic than the average shocker; but the sudden nasty jolts are there in sufficient quantity, and they arrive all the more shockingly for being comparatively unexpected—and also for being so perfectly timed. The snort of a horse, the sound of a girl singer's voice cut short in a gasp, a glimpse of a head under brine in the dissecting-room, that last awful climax—these and other incidents produce that authentic grue, that creeping of the flesh, which all true exponents of horror in literature and the drama strive for but so rarely achieve.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE first running of Karapiro's great generator marked a milestone in development of New Zealand's hydro-electric system, which when completed, will give the North Island all the power it needs. The National Film Unit has devoted the whole of *Weekly Review* No. 297, released on May 9, to Karapiro. It shows the giant undertaking in the days preceding the running of the generator, when Horahora was shut down and submerged. There are also scenes showing the generator running, the first water over the spillway, the rise of the lake, the strength of the Waikato River, and a general survey of the whole Karapiro project.

To the Editor—

"CARAVAN"

Sir,—Your critic must have had a very bad night somewhere else than at the pictures prior to writing his criticism of *Caravan*. I went to see this picture, was much impressed with it, and have advised many people I have since met to see it at the first opportunity. The presentation of gypsy life was most interesting. The principals were excellently selected, played their parts well, and held one's interest from beginning to end.—"LOVER OF A GOOD PICTURE" (Westport).

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MAY 9

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Books of Permanent Interest

LIFE AND LETTERS OF GUSTAV MAHLER, Alma Mahler, 27/6 posted. The very remarkable and intimate life story of Gustav Mahler by his brilliant wife. A book of first importance to music-lovers.

PSYCHOLOGY FOR MUSICIANS, Percy C. Buck, 11/6 posted. An analysis of the relation of Psychology to music (and to all art) by an author who knows both subjects thoroughly.

HOW OUR MINDS WORK, C. E. M. Joad, 9/3 posted. In this short, lucid interpretation of how our minds work, Dr. Joad gives a clear and satisfactory answer to the problem.

ANATOMY OF LETTERING, Russell Laker, 16/3 posted. Russell Laker leads the student through various styles, expertly analysing and illustrating each variant. A "Studio" publication.

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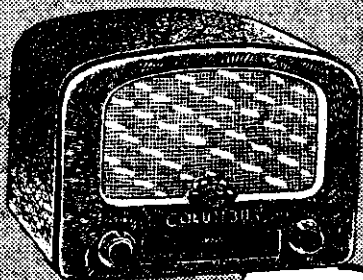
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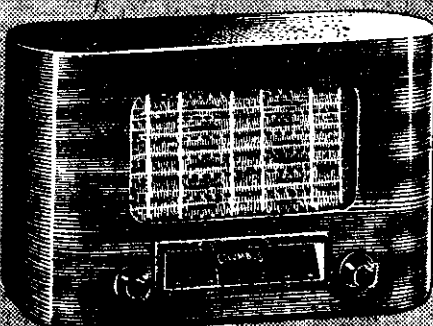
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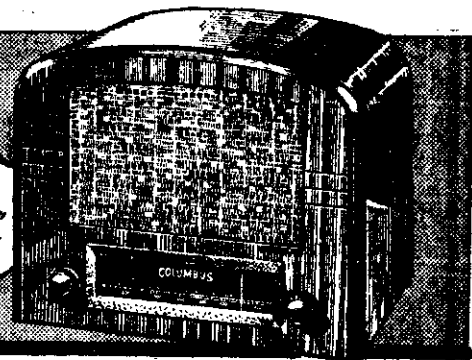
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