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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

North-West Passage

OF all the dreams of exploration envisaged by the mind of adventurous man, I suppose the quest for the North-West Passage must rank as one of the most exciting. Few projects have enticed voyagers for so many hundreds of years, or been pursued with such dogged persistence. As a subject for the BBC programme *Travellers' Tales*, this problem of exploration was well chosen, and in the short time allotted, the many and varied attempts at finding this northern sea-way were concisely related, from the early days when Queen Elizabeth gave her blessing to Frobisher, to the latest voyage by a Canadian staff-sergeant, Frobisher, Davis, Baffin, Baring, Cook, Ross, Parry, Franklin—all failed. Franklin, who first explored along the icy northern coast of Canada in an Indian canoe, was later to command two ships and 134 volunteer officers and men in an ill-fated expedition in which, after having found the passage they sought, every single member perished; no less than 39 relief parties searched for them, at a total cost of more than a million pounds, but nothing remained save skeletons in the snow, a message in a tin, and Eskimo tales of the last tragic march when the ships had been abandoned—a tale as stirring and hopeless as that of Scott in the South. In 1905 Captain Amundsen sailed completely round the northern coast of America, being the first to achieve the north-west passage. Staff-Sergeant Larsen, of Canada, who spoke on the programme, was the first to sail the passage both ways. The tale of incredible adventure, suffering, and achievement leaves the listener with the mental query, "In an air-minded age, of what use is the North-West Passage, anyway?" But the answer to that is for the practical-minded, and has no place in this imaginative chronicle of adventure.

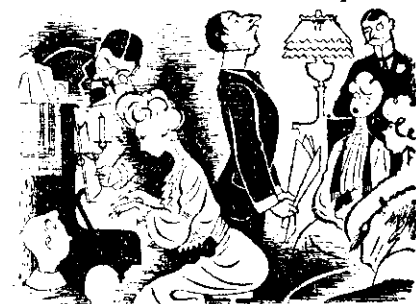
Ling'ring Mem'ries

THE nostalgic gentlemen who revive songs redolent of old lavender and mothballs in programmes such as 3YL's *Do You Remember?* have more to distinguish them from the present-day variety of hit-paraders than the boaters and bow ties which they probably wore. But when you boil it all down, it appears that it is not theme, technique, syncopation, psychology, or Spike Jones that makes the difference; it's just a matter of vocabulary. The sentiment under the straw boater, in short, is no different from the sentiment in the zoot-suit—but it's differently expressed. You Are the Honey Honey Suckle no longer; instead, with truly succinct aptness—so they tell me—You're an Old Smoothie. In the same way Tea for Two becomes by a natural process of thought and—presumably—progress, Drinking Rum and Coca-Cola. He no longer meets her Down By the Old Mill Stream as he used to do, but in the Five and Ten Cent Store, which has the double advantage of being (a) more practical and (b) more likely. And when she lets him down he doesn't tell us now Oh What a Pal Was Mary as he did in Monday night's session and no doubt many other times; he remarks what a Hot Babe was Mabe and as likely as not goes off to Buy a Paper Doll that He Can Call

His Own—which is after all the only sensible thing to do under the circumstances.

Blaming the Bard

ALL the best ingredients of a really thrilling serial came to light in "Meet the Travellers," from the BBC series,



Travellers' Tales. Most exciting of all was the description of a blood-curdling encounter with real live vampires; and when the travellers reached the top of the Highest Waterfall in the world it only needed a slight suggestion that someone was about to push someone else over the edge to have me waiting avidly on the next episode. However, nothing of the sort happened, and I contented myself with roundly condemning adventure serials in general, and the father of all of them in particular. Look at his *Macbeth*—witches, any number of murders, a drunken humorist, a somnambulist, and pseudo-historical information, about the origins of military camouflage. Think how it would go in a serial ("What have the Weird Sisters to say to Macbeth this time? Listen again next Thursday for another thrilling instalment, etc."). Or even *Hamlet* ("What will be the outcome of the duel? Do not miss the concluding instalment of this gripping serial"). Any modern serial writer, however, knows better than to leave his stage littered with corpses; he marries 'em off. So I don't really know that we can blame the Bard entirely for present-day trends; at any rate for "stagey trash" give me Shakespeare every time.

Science at Your Service

A COLUMNIST in a daily paper recently quoted what he regarded as a glaring example of geographical inexactitude—the beginning of a short story in a Wellington paper. "Driven before a blustery half-gale that roared in out of the South Pacific night, sheets of icy rain sluiced down upon the streets of Auckland, driving all but the hardiest citizens to the warmth and shelter of their homes." However after hearing Dr. Guy Harris's Sunday afternoon talk from 2YA entitled *Ice Ages*, it is possible to regard it as merely an example of futurity. For, says Dr. Harris, it can happen here. But it will probably not happen for some thousands of years, so that we are not immediately liable to find ourselves in the grip of another ice age. Dr. Harris's talks are excellent, but badly proportioned in that they are too short for their weight. We are still gaping admiringly at his competent juggling with terms such as Pleistocene and Mesozoic when the 15 minutes end,

(continued on next page)

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MAY 23