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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Third Programme

THE "Europeanism of outlook" which Elizabeth Bowen in a recent article on the BBC's Third Programme (then in the sixth month of its existence), notes as "an exciting new trend" is not, one would imagine, for us. I was reminded of this the other day when 3YA gave us on a different level a programme of "Four New English Releases." These consisted of two items by Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra (one by a Russian, the other by an American composer), and two French songs by the tenor Jean Cavall. This is of course a mere hotch-potch of nationalities. Elizabeth Bowen has in mind something rather more extreme, more specialised. She suggests, for interest, "one act of Barrault's (Paris) *Hamlet*, in Barrault's French, followed by the same act as played here by, say, Gielgud." And this, she claims, would be interesting even if you did not understand French. But one point of Third Programme policy which might well be imitated here is that of "repeats." Any important item goes back on the air any number of times; if you miss it one evening you can hear it the next, and in any case become thoroughly familiar with it. New major works of interest are rare enough for this to be done without undue monotony.

We Have Been Warned

IN spite of its dramatic form, Nesta Pain's production "Atomic Energy," a BBC programme broadcast recently from 3YA, was not calculated to provide fireside entertainment. The dominant theme was one of warning—a plea to "do something before it is too late," which does not go well with a comfortable chair by the hearth. The futuristic description which ends the programme, of an atomic bomb explosion over London in the year 1953, was too realistic and too wholly credible to be regarded with the detached interest one usually accords such flights of the imagination. It was only too obvious that there was no need for even six years to elapse before such a disaster—inadequate word—became possible; it could happen to-day. This was a programme obviously intended to make the listener uncomfortable, and it was admirably done. Nesta Pain makes full use of the dramatic form without letting it take control. And there was a strong sense of understatement and reserve about the whole thing which made for force and directness, like a cryptic notice board: You Have Been Warned!

Morale-Building

I DON'T know whether the sale of cosmetics will suffer a sudden decline or the bottle-collection a corresponding boom as a result of the recent A.C.E. talk "More About Cosmetics." But certainly its delicate debunking of cosmetic preparations must have some effect, even if it only leads one to look twice at one's cold cream jar to see if it has a false bottom. In any case, My Lady's disillusionment is now complete. She has had the magical preparations which are to bring her beauty—at a price—ruthlessly analysed into sheep's grease and chemical acid. She has been frankly informed that the best thing for "the

skin he loves to touch" is plain soap and water; nothing more. She has been warned that the skin foods, vitamin creams, and what-have-yous that she would fain spend money on (if she had it) are all impostors. Hard facts can go no further. But as it is, My Lady might be prepared to issue forth as a shining example to her friends, if it were not for one thing. She finds the price per jar or bottle a low enough one to pay for the amount of readily-applied morale it contains.

Call Yourself a Flatfoot

I HAVE decided that when I read a whodunit I do so not to find out who did it (only the author really cares) but what everybody, including the detective, does about it. To me the least interesting parts of the story are those when, with due regard for her feelings, the master mind interrogates the reluc-



while the humble village constable is left without an audience in his more interesting task of investigating the relics. The trouble with 2YA's *Call Yourself a Detective* is that it's almost all talk and no action. The method adopted is briefly this—the comper gives an account of a fictional crime in which clues to the murderer and his methods protrude like beckoning fingers. Whereupon the four guest artists muffle their shots and it is left to a bright boy from the outer audience to play Darcy to Ernest Dudley's Will Hay. Seriously this is the type of BBC programme calculated to drive listeners straight into the arms of Lemmy Caution. Mr. Dudley is far too genteel, too considerate of the feelings of others, there is no hint of steel in that soft palm beneath the woollen glove. Yet if ever guest artists needed a bit of third-degreering these do, if only as punishment for wasting so much of the audience's time in fatuous burlings. Jan Struther (Mrs. Miniver's creator) thought it might be the squire's wife because she "felt there was something about her" and didn't like the sergeant either, in fact she didn't like any of them. An ex-Chief Constable of Scotland Yard thought he might be able to express an opinion after he'd had five minutes alone with each suspect. Meanwhile the radio audience shuffled its feet and squirmed, but the comper and his artists were well insulated in a sound-proof studio. However, future sessions sound a little more