

promising (next week John Dickson Carr and Peter Cheyney are among the guest artists).

One Fine Day

USUALLY our radio plays tend to pedestrianism, they are competent but self-controlled, they follow the beaten paths of humour or romance and suppress any desire they may have to go hurdling over the hedges of conventional scriptwriting or to make themselves airborne on wings of fantasy. Not so *One Fine Day*, a play by Emery Bonnet which listeners heard from 2YC the other Sunday, a play compounded not merely of dialogue and sound effects (the latter on occasion all too obvious) but of sugar and spice (Gallic variety) and all things calculated to lift a radio play out of the rut and into the bright upper air. One fine day Apollo, hearing talk of the gods and goddesses of the modern world, decides to investigate them for himself, and spends the day with a film company on location. His view of the stars in their courses is different from Hedda Hopper's (his is a daylight trip) and the light he sheds on happenings around him is all beneficent. *One Fine Day* has verve and wit and grace. It represents the champagne we occasionally get for our 25/- beer money.

Leacock and Tusitala

STATION 2ZB's Tusitala usually confines himself to what is earnest if not what is real, so it was a delightful surprise to find him rendering *Soaked in Seaweed* from 2ZB last Wednesday. But I am still wondering whether the amalgam of Leacock and Tusitala was an entirely satisfactory one. Leacock can bend over backwards and Tusitala does not unbend, retaining, even under great provocation, his formality of presentation. Now there were two ways of presenting the Leacock, either with fire-side informality, allowing yourself an occasional second's chuckling time, or, possibly better, the mock heroic presentation. Tusitala's treatment was sternly heroic, but lacked the element of burlesque. The result was that the listener felt vaguely guilty in his giggles, as one might who detected dubious double-entendres in the bishop's impressively-delivered sermon.

Air-conditioned Drama

I KNOW little of Mabel Constanduros as a playwright and less of her as an actress, but I suspect that she fills the latter role rather better than she does the former. Her play, *Breaking Point*, broadcast the other evening from 3YA, was not, I think, worth the time and talent the NZBS put into it. It is the story of a successful music-hall star who begins to feel the strain of her dual role as darling-of-the-public and devoted mother. Revolving around her in their accustomed orbits are her True Lover, her Devoted Son, and the Scheming Woman who tries to make mischief between him and his mother. There is a melodramatic scene involving an overdose of sleeping tablets, and the opportune arrival of Lover, Son, and Family Doctor. All is thereupon straightened out. It was, frankly, a silly play. But it had one redeeming feature in Tuppy, the star's sharp-tongued and outspoken personal maid ("That's not laughter, Miss, That's high-strikes"); she was a spot of colour in the otherwise drab mediocrity of character and situation. The NZBS is doing excellent work in its dramatic productions. But there seem to be too few plays available which are really suitable for radio broadcasting;

the ideal radio play should actually gain from the invisibility of its actors—not lose as is so often the case with the average play.

James the Old Pretender

IT is not easy to do justice to any writer through the medium of a broadcast talk, and, in the case of Henry James, I think it is attempting the impossible. But for those who are already admirers of James, the recent programme in the BBC series, *The Written Word: the Development of the English Novel*, dealing with Henry James, would be familiar ground. His detachment, his psychology, his subtlety, his obliquity, and all the other characteristics which defy illustration, would merely serve to confirm what the listener already knew. An outline of one of his incredible plots would recall the delight of first reading the novel. And maybe that is what the BBC intended—a programme for the few. But there is, on the other hand, a vast number of people who have never read James; to whom a recital of his characteristics will mean absolutely nothing; and to whom the outlined plot will sound as fatuous as it undeniably is. In quotation he sounds bombastic and boring, in anecdote unpleasantly snobbish; yet none of this is the real James, and it is poor recommendation to read him—which is, in the last resort, the best thing you can do with any writer.

In Search of Knowledge

THIS has been truthfully called the Age of the Quiz, and the ancient philosopher who claimed that "Knowledge is Virtue" would be somewhat disturbed to-day to learn that Knowledge is Hard Cash, and may be converted thereto at your local Quiz session. And he would be startled at the high price set on it. The half-crowns were flying at 3ZB the other evening—one for placing a quotation, another for naming an ambassador, another for knowing where caraway seed comes from. I suppose sheer knowledge has never been so well rewarded since three riddles answered won the hand of the princess in marriage. Only these days the prince works on a cash basis. And that appears to be the one and only justification for the Quiz—it provides cash value for otherwise useless information. I have always had a lot of sympathy for the Great Man who could never remember whether the earth went round the sun or the sun round the earth, and who did his best to forget when told because he "saw no sense in cluttering up his mind with useless facts." In our present enlightened age any information may bring you in the price of a crust. The only snag is that you may starve while waiting to be asked for it.

Marathon Tour

SAN FRANCISCO'S first orchestra (organised even before the city) was a group of 13 Indians trained by Spanish friars in 1827. San Francisco's present Symphony Orchestra has 100 members. Recently it appeared in Manhattan, on the most extensive tour ever undertaken by a U.S. symphony orchestra. Its schedule was 56 concerts in 57 days and Manhattan was just about the half-way mark. The conductor, Pierre Monteux (who was Serge Koussevitzky's predecessor in Boston 23 years ago) said: "If the orchestra is on tour or not, it has to play every day. A three-hour rehearsal is much more tiring than an hour-and-a-half performance. They take this as a sort of vacation."

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