

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

"The Trojan Women"

STRANGE that even at the first or second remove from actuality of a radio recording the old unhappy far-off things should have so much potency; that we should be able to weep for a Hecuba the pauses in whose lament are filled with the faint sibilance of a gramophone needle, to recoil from the horror of the destruction of Troy when we know this roar of flames and this crashing of masonry are but proofs of the effects-man's virtuosity. Art is long, and *The Trojan Women* is for all time. It is amazing how little one misses the distractions of the stage performance. The text (Professor Gilbert Murray's translation) becomes all-important, and the exquisite rightness of the words and rhythms satisfies a sense grown super-sensitive through the exclusion of the visual faculty. The familiarity of the story too exerts its spell, but Euripidean magic has transformed mythological heroines into women, women human enough to prefer dishonour to death, and not above wasting precious almost-last words on abuse of their fellow-unfortunate, Helen, she whose face was "a dark desire upon all Greece." But even the Word, by Murray out of Euripides, cannot prevail without the human voice to make it flesh. In the BBC's World Theatre presentation, heard recently from 2YA, Sybil Thorndyke as Hecuba, and Rita Williams as Andromache give life to Euripides's poetry and immediacy to his drama.

Woman at Large

PETER CHEYNEY'S "Julia," whose "Adventures" are at present being broadcast from 3YA, is a most remarkable woman, and I intend to hear her through to the end. She appears to be one of the few heroines who are consistently unscrupulous, and who get away with it. She keeps on the right side of the law, not through any respect for its commands, but simply because she finds it pays her better. Of course she is very beautiful or she wouldn't get away with half of it. I listened to the first broadcast of her adventures—no understatement, that—in frank amazement as each twist revealed the woman's incredible cunning and ingenuity. And I shall listen in trepidation to the last; because I have a horrid fear that she will reform, and do something that is not in her own interests—even perhaps be so accommodating as to cast herself into marriage with some bedazzled official of the law. Julia has my best wishes, and I hope she can stick to her own crooked course. But she is the sort of woman who should never have been let loose, even on the radio.

Alice and Mathematics

TO make Alice pop in and out of a framework, built like a hoarding to advertise her immortality, with much more ease than she climbs through the looking glass is the achievement of Gordon Crier, whose programme "Have You Read Alice in Wonderland?" was heard from 2YA the other Sunday night, with enjoyment by the many and possibly gnashing of teeth by the few. For we must at all costs be tolerant. To persons who have not read Alice this programme was, as it was intended to be, an excellent introduction to both the book and its author. To those who have

read Alice it was an excellent refresher course. To the word-perfect and the devotees of undiluted Dodgson was left the privilege of clicking the switch and retiring to a corner with a well-thumbed copy. I was pleased to hear that Mr. Crier agrees with me that it is perfectly logical and in fact natural rather than surprising that the creator of Alice should be a professor of mathematics, for mathematicians delight in imposing logical form on the illogical.

Colossal Fraud

I WAS heartily in agreement with D. H. Munro when, in his talk from 4YA, he stated, "It may seem an immoral thing to say, but I don't see the objection to forgeries!" He was speaking of the forging of collectors' items, such as antiques of all descriptions, with particular reference to old books and first editions. "Why are first editions valued?" he asked, and indeed one may well wonder. Surely not on account of literary value, since any reprint is as good for the purpose of reading; not for beauty, many first editions being notable examples of typographical ugliness. No, the first edition has nothing more than a scarcity value, and so is in reality no more interesting than the faultily-printed rare postage stamp. After this sane and sensible introduction to the talk, it was impossible for the listener to condemn the subject of it, a certain literary notability who died as recently as 1938—Thomas Wise. This eminent bibliographer and collector seems to have been responsible for flooding the rare book market with forged first editions which were sold for magnificent sums to reputable collectors. The details of the printing and publishing of these masterpieces which Mr. Munro supplied were fascinating. Somehow I couldn't do anything at the conclusion of this exposure of Thomas Wise but lift an imaginary hat to the man responsible for such a delightful swindle. The gem of the talk was Mr. Munro's final suggestion, that it wouldn't be a bad thing for collectors to buy up these bogus first editions; at the height of Wise's success they were worth impossible sums, to-day they are worthless—but who knows, in the not-too-distant future a genuine Wise forgery may have, for a collector, as much value as though it were the real article it originally counterfeited!

Messrs. R. and G.

IT can scarcely be imagined that a programme of interest could be devoted solely to a couple of minor characters in a drama such as *Hamlet*. But in the BBC series *Shakespeare's Characters*, Herbert Farjeon chose as his theme those two gentlemen Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. I have probably read *Hamlet* half-a-dozen times and seen it two or three, and it is possible that I am not the only listener who has departed from such performances with only the vaguest notion about Messrs. R. and G. An average audience may wonder, perhaps, how Shakespeare invented two such names, but may take

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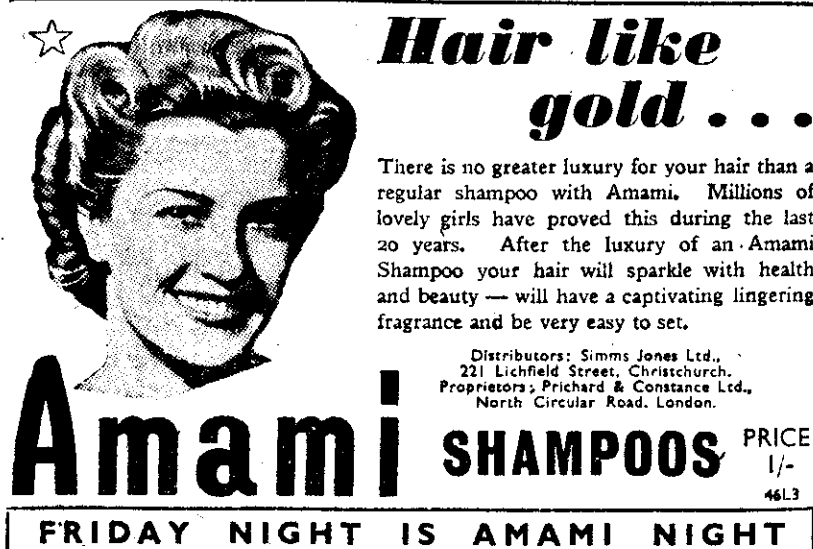


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