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owes its inspiration to current events, popular literature, or the necessity of fitting a score to a film story. The two items by Arlen and Young would have passed without criticism entirely, had they not preceded the Theme and Variations by the modern British composer Rawsthorne. This piece of counterpoint, written simply for two violins and nothing else, is a vivid and stimulating work, and stands as an example to students of composition who may be attracted to the school of Concerto-Composers: if they will take time off from writing for piano and full orchestra, they may well realise in listening to these variations that effects as exquisite, as telling, and as lasting may be got with the minimum of effort and the slenderest means.

Words and Music

"INTERESTING" is often used by the commentator, when all else fails, in a desperate effort to find the right word for something that is not only good but worthwhile; it is time this overused word was dropped in favour of something more definite. I barely prevented myself from using it in a comment on a recital from 4YA by the soprano Margaret Laing; a fine recital of modern British songs by Besley, Shaw, and Bantock. The two songs by Granville Bantock, "The Peach Flower" and "Yung Yang," which demand the creation of a mature and yet delicate atmosphere, were excellently done. This was one of the few occasions on which, listening to these songs, I have heard all the words. I am not in agreement with the obstinately musical school of thought which declares that the best vocal music would lose nothing by, being sung in an unknown language, and that it is the purely musical values which count. It is true that opera is best sung in its language of origin, even if this means that half the audience doesn't understand it, since most English translations are so abominable as to be a constant source of irritation. But in the case of modern British song-writers, most of them have chosen to set the best poems of the English school, words and music are indissolubly mated, and failure to hear the words means losing a clue to the music's theme and emotional atmosphere.

Scots Wha Hae

THERE is something about the wild Scottish moors smothered in mist that makes the discovery that a ghostly 200-year-old crime is being re-enacted seem almost matter of fact. *Night on Skail Moor*, by Horton Giddie, a BBC programme, presupposes from its very title almost anything. Night on the moor is bound to mean murder—and if the setting is Scotland what other touch is required but the historical one, with a suspicion of Bonnie Prince Charlie to taste? One of the most attractive things about this play is its dialogue, the conversation between the couple lost in the mist being more convincing in its spontaneity than any I have heard for a long time. The Scottish atmosphere too is well suggested without being overdone. I liked the soft cautious reticence of both ghost and ghillie, also the upstart Laird who had bought himself a tartan preparatory to founding a clan.

But I couldn't help thinking that the same story, set for instance in a Canterbury marsh or hill top with the re-enacting of an ancient Maori-Pakeha quarrel, would fall lamentably short of the mark. It's the Scots wha hae the atmosphere and they can get away with it.

Down Jacobs' Ladder

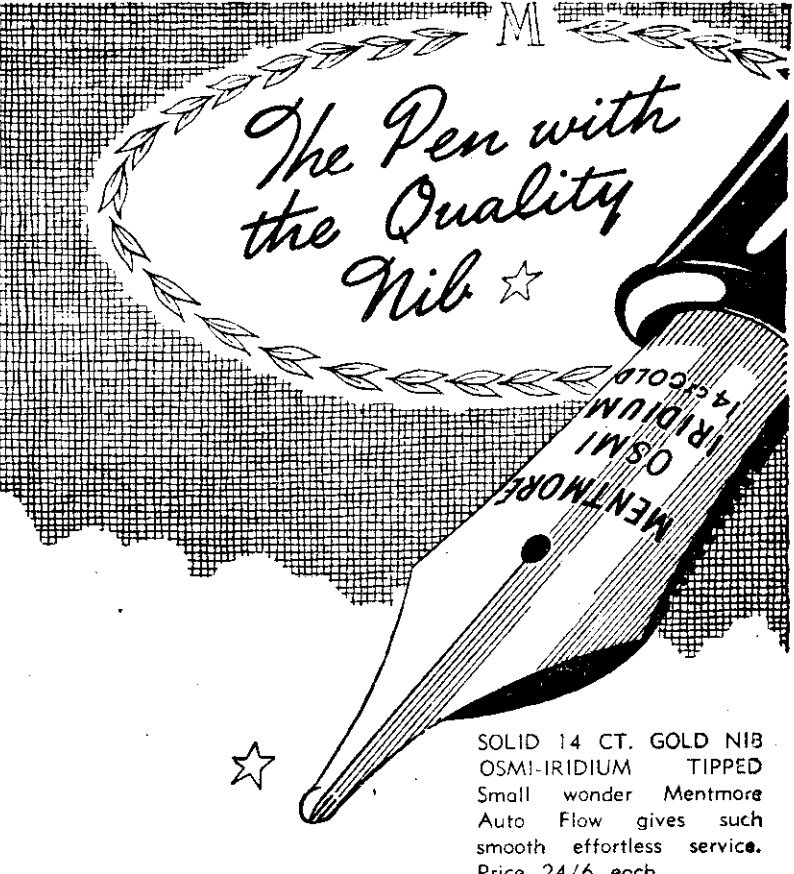
FROM an early enthusiasm for W. W. Jacobs in dramatised form, I am rapidly descending to mere tolerance; and I have come to the conclusion that the enthusiasm was for the dramatic form, the tolerance is for Jacobs. Both the NZBS and the BBC have done full justice to the originals. The accents are, as far as one can tell, faithfully reproduced; the cleverly conceived plot and situation are enhanced. The play, as a play, is as good as it can be: but play or story, almost every piece by Jacobs illustrates the success of the cunning, unscrupulous wangler over his slower-witted companions. Thus in *Good Intentions*, the wretched man who does a good turn for his captain by taking charge of the latter's superfluous lady friend, exposes himself finally to the combined assault of the lady herself, his own wife, his shipmates, the police, and finally—unkindest cut—the captain himself. The ironic realism of it does not help to take away the taste of a prolonged diet of such fare. There is a lot to be said, after all, for the escapism of the old melodrama, where the true hero was easily distinguished by the uprightness of both his conduct and his collar, and by the fact that neither wilted in the face of circumstance.

Saturday Date

INCLUDED in a recent symphonic programme from 3YL was Mahler's *Song of the Earth*, an unusual symphonic work which I found very satisfying. It is a cycle of six songs, based on old Chinese poems, and usually arranged (as in this case) for tenor and contralto alternately. There is a depth and restraint about this work which is not always apparent in Mahler; it is, I think, one of his later compositions, written when he had more or less subdued the over-emotionalism which runs through his earlier works. In any case, *The Song of the Earth* is an interesting arrangement and I was glad of the chance to hear it afforded by 3YL's Saturday evening concert programme. These programmes, by the way, are maintained at a consistently high standard. It is seldom that a week goes by without some item of special musical interest being featured in them, and a series such as the Mozart symphonies which concluded the previous week has given welcome continuity of good listening. The lesser works, too, which go to build up these programmes, are well chosen to suit, within limits, a variety of tastes. The result is an evening's entertainment which can be relied on to please.

Tales from Olympus

FREE from anthropological taint was a programme I heard from 2YA last Monday, "Tales of the Olympian Gods," where Ronald Colman, with even more than his usual air of cultivation, recounts Greek myths to the accompaniment of suitable music (not the Rite of Spring) by Victor Young and his orchestra. The union was a pleasing one, and I should think there would be room for more programmes along the same lines since (to most of us) Greek myths are a long forgotten part of our equally mythical schooldays.



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