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of the lyre from seeing and hearing a great deal else that went on. And the result, if not quite so pretty, was at least a great deal more life-like than it



might have been otherwise. I have a suspicion that the rogues and swindlers of Elizabethan England — the riff-raff of the taverns and the play-houses—should be left out in such cases, for a very good reason: they steal the show!

Potted Topics

IT was a little disappointing to find that 3ZB's interview with Ngaio Marsh, in which Miss Marsh was to answer the question "Is the Detective Novel Dying?" lasted only five minutes. This, of course, gave Miss Marsh barely time to qualify her answer; after which she skilfully dodged an invitation to name her choice of the six best detective novels, and, when pressed further, named a first choice with obvious reluctance. The result of all this was an interview which was scarcely satisfactory to the listener, and which would have infuriated me if I were Miss Marsh. Later in the same Sunday evening programme we heard Public Opinion dealing with the old question of "Civilisation": is it natural, and are we any happier for it. After a number of people had given very brief opinions on the matter, the featured speaker, A. N. Prior, gave his views with great clarity and even greater caution. (All his caution, however, did not prevent Master-of-Ceremonies Al Sleeman from reducing his statement to an epigrammatic "it is natural to be artificial.") Having given civilisation the O.K., we then swept on to a lively interview with Randolph Churchill, touching on such topics as war, Communism, and American Big Business. After that I switched off and went to bed. If it is possible to suffer indigestion as a result of too much pre-digested material, that was what I was suffering from. In any case I was still trying to catch up with the symptoms of decline in the detective novel.

Documentary

THE BBC documentary *Middle East*, heard recently from 4YA, is the type of programme we hear too seldom. Other programmes give us facts—usually told in a monotone, like beads on a verbal string, by a speaker full of erudition but lacking in broadcasting technique. Other programmes are well presented, wasting a great deal of clever

production on poor material. *Middle East* gave us interesting facets of life in Egypt, Syria, and so on, with particular reference to the part played by the armed forces during the war, in such activities as organising supplies of grain, produce, etc.; the combating of the locust plague; the attempt to teach the villagers the necessity for taking steps to avoid further soil erosion. Presented in a series of dramatic vignettes, with the local colour applied not merely for its own sake but to heighten the effect of certain scenes, and with a cast of speakers ranging from the Egyptian school-child to the Scottish engineer, the facts were so well camouflaged that it was not until afterwards that the listener realised that the programme was a documentary, and that entertainment had at the same time provided education. I notice that the word "documentary" was used in *The Listener* to describe this programme; it is an excellent method of presenting such a subject—and how attractive would the story of our own environs and people appear if given us in the same manner, instead of being presented, as it often is now, in lecture-form by uninspired speakers!

Cook off Otago

THE 1948 celebrations of Otago's Centenary may be said to have begun already, at least on the radio side. Dr. A. H. McIntock, from 4YA, began a series of talks on Otago's history by telling us in his first talk about the mapping of the coastline by Captain Cook. Cook did not land on the East coast of Otago, but merely sailed along it, giving names to various well-known landmarks, Cape Saunders, Saddle Hill, and the Molyneux. It might amaze listeners to find that by mere observation of the coast, Cook was able to make a surprisingly accurate chart, and to come to various conclusions regarding the inland. Cook didn't think much, evidently, of Otago, or of the South Island in general—which proves that even famous explorers are capable of snap judgments, and may be proved wrong by an ungrateful posterity. The voyage of Cook along both Otago coasts, east and west, was transformed by Dr. McIntock from a dusty record to an exciting account of adventure in search of the mythical southern continent which was half-believed to exist in these regions. The description of the forbidding vastnesses of the Western ranges, as seen from the Tasman sea, presented us with a picture of a part of Otago which is wildly different from the docile Pacific coastline. These talks about Otago and its history will be heard weekly on Tuesdays at 8.30 p.m. from 4YA.

Floored

TO call a play *The Flaw* when it is obviously full of them is to arouse the baser detective instincts of one's audience, and to fob them off with the latter-day explanation that the fact that the unconscious self can act unknown to the conscious self is the flaw in our belief in free-will is tantamount to telling readers of a whodunit that the whole thing was a mistake and the man died from natural causes. *The Flaw* (from 2YA on a recent Friday) is one of those ephemeral plays whose plot would vanish into thin air beneath a cold douche of common sense; but the author, realising this, has seen to it that few of the characters have enough of that commodity to damage the play's delicate fabric (the heroine, of course, has none at all).



Interesting Teapots

No. 1: Spode

Josiah Spode the first, established one of England's greatest potteries. He worked in salt glazed stoneware, jasper and basalt as well as in porcelain. The teapot illustrated, made about 1765, is in Egyptian red ware with floral design in pink, yellow, green and blue enamel colours.

BELL

THE TEA OF GOOD TASTE

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