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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Amnesia

I ENJOYED the neat little two-man vehicle for Selwyn Toogood and William Austin, *The Waters of Lethe*, which I heard from 2ZB on a recent Sunday evening. Written by G. Murray Milne, it is a tough little drama about amnesia, a particularly radio-active topic, I have always thought, since it enables the central character to start off on equal terms with his audience. When both know exactly nothing about what has gone before, it is not necessary, for example, to find out what the hero looks like by underhand means ("I looked at myself in the mirror. I saw a well-dressed man of five feet ten . . ."). And though radio thrillers are usually full of indefinable menace there is even more likelihood of the menace being indefinable if the hero doesn't know who he is or where he was last night. My only quarrel with *The Waters of Lethe* was the somewhat unnecessary troubling of the waters by bursts of invariably heavy and often inappropriate music. Why a cheerful march for the hero's hunted ascent of the escalator?

Knit One, Slip One

THOSE who have seen *Milestones* on the stage must have been impressed by the pictorial values of the piece—the three-generational formula gives plenty of scope for costumes and settings, and a goodly display of the company's pulchritude is ensured by the large female cast demanded by the play. Yet in spite of this the radio theatre production of *Milestones* from 2YA recently was the most enjoyable I have heard for some time in this series, and the very absence of visual distractions and the pruning necessary to compress the play into the conventional hour served to emphasise the essential shapeliness of this sturdy example of Edwardian literary boscage. I liked the way the announcer put the drama firmly in its historical place by announcing "1860, and Florence Nightingale at Scutari, while here at Kensington Grove . . ." But what chiefly enamoured me of *Milestones* as opposed to other radio plays of equal calibre was the fact that it was so easy to follow. The *dramatis personae* wove themselves without effort on the listener's part into a simple and comprehensible pattern. It was none of this "make one, drop one" which Mr. Askey would find so confusing, and which is the predominant stitch in most radio dramas where characters appear and disappear at their creator's whim, but rather a kind of "knit one, slip one" in which the slipped characters, like Aunt Gertrude, are kept firmly on the needle and can be counted up at the end of the play.

Musical Grab-bag

WHO'S Who in Radio is certainly an ingenious method of arranging a programme of a popular kind. The uncertainty of the items maintains the listener's interest—from such a grab-bag, who knows what rare and beautiful surprise may not emerge? But what an outcry there would be from musically-minded listeners if this method were used to arrange a serious musical programme! Among the B's, for instance, we might have our three classic examples, Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, sandwiched between Bartok and Irving Berlin! However, this method is never

(I hope) likely to be tried with the classics, and in *Who's Who* it at least ensures that the patient listener who follows it from A to Z will afterwards be able to identify scores of artists who are strangers to him at present.

Not Amused

I WAS interested in *Queen Victoria Was Furious*, a study of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, broadcast recently from 3YA. Though Her Majesty's disapproval is restricted to a malevolent presence hovering furiously (but regally) over the lives of those feminists who so successfully upset the conservative peace of her reign, I liked the scene in the tea-shop, when Emily abruptly asks an astonished waitress what wages she is getting. But it must have been very tempting to the script-writers to make much of the amours of these ladies. After all, it was the Victorian era, and they were openly casting aside the shackles of convention, Elizabeth Garrett, however, was sufficiently orthodox to combine most admirably the role of career-girl with that of mother—which must have gone far to increase the fury of Her Thwarted Majesty, who was doing just that with more questionable success.

Psychology

A PROGRAMME with an unusual flavour was "The Psychologist's Laboratory," the first in a series of three on *The Human Mind*, produced for the BBC by Nesta Paine. Without any of the spectacular features so often assumed in popular presentation of the psychologist's work, it was still sound and interesting. The methods used for scientific research into the human mind—as opposed to the blatantly unscientific—were well demonstrated in the form of a class of students testing one another under their professor's guidance. This gave meaning to what would otherwise have been a mere recital of facts, and a description of disappointingly simple devices. There was real humour too in the character of the professor, who was much more than a mouthpiece for the information he so deprecatingly advanced.

Yes I Know the Muffin Man

I WAS surprised to read in a recent Listener correspondent's letter that we are ill-supplied with humour on the air; but as Joad would say, "It all depends what you mean by humour." Certainly it's difficult to tune into a Wellington station at random without hearing that roar of tame-audience approval which indicates that someone has been fed a chestnut by somebody, but if we exclude the variety shows the earnest seeker after humour has at the present time much to be thankful for. *ITMA* is back at 2YA, Cheerful Charlie Chester (guillotined in mid-career from 2YA some months ago) has been dusted off and given a new lease of life from 2ZB on Sunday nights, Tusitala is not above telling an occasional Anthony Armstrong story, 2YD's Friday night *Comedyland* continues to bring us the great and the goods. But if I were asked to name the most consistently rewarding session of this kind on the Wellington air I should without hesitation plump for Will Hay's Tuesday night half-hour from 2YC. The *Will Hay Programme* has few extraneous aids to

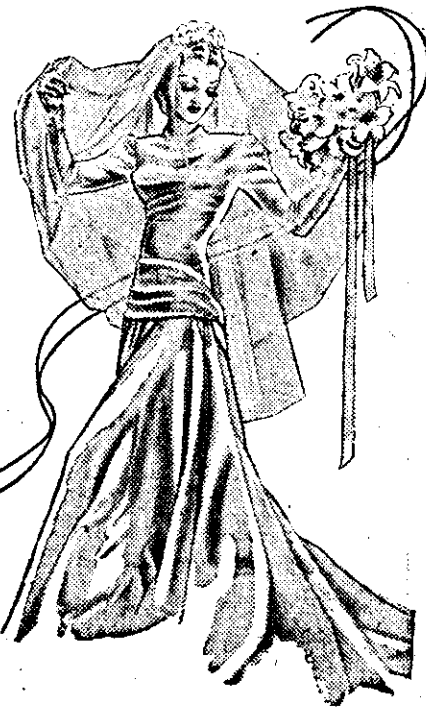
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