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(continued from previous page)

myself, most listeners would know only the bare facts of the situation, and would leave it to the script-writer to enlarge their further technical knowledge of safari in Darkest Africa. The first instalment was certainly full of such data, and the initial obstacles in Stanley's way seemed so insuperable that I was pleased to be merely listening instead of participating in that particular piece of exploration. It is difficult to judge a serial by the first instalment, but this begins well.

English Essayists

BOTH William Hazlitt and his writing came in for their due share in a recent talk in the series, *The Written Word*. Hazlitt, like the bee, might have had a sting in his tail, but his honey was unsurpassed. The famous description of Coleridge was a good choice for quotation—"his nose . . . was small and mean—nothing like his work." A little hard on Coleridge, perhaps, but then people did not make Hazlitt's life a bed of roses either. In this quotation, as in others, one sees the artist—his early ambition—apparent in Hazlitt. His pen pictures have the added advantage of making good radio listening. It would certainly be a little galling during one's lifetime, but for the purposes of posterity one would as soon be remembered in Hazlitt's abuse as in the praise of most people. There is real enjoyment in these programmes, even for those to whom Hazlitt is merely a name. In any case it is comforting for us merer mortals to hear somebody abuse the great and be acclaimed for it.

Chorus Girls

I HAVE listened with interest to several of the BBC programmes *British Characters*, but one of the best was that dealing with the Chorus Girl. I don't know what I imagined I was going to hear—possibly my subconscious was urging me to anticipate scenes of wild depravity interspersed with buckets of champagne and expensive roses, as exemplified in chorus-girl romances of an earlier day when the stage door was thickly clustered with top-hats, and the hansom cab waited without. However, the average chorus-girl, as this programme flatly told us, is merely another worker, and a harder one than most of us. Not roses and bubbly, but umbrellas and mackintoshes, tired feet and poor lodgings are her portion, and a grindingly long and hard road to be traversed before even these modest rewards are forthcoming. One point I hadn't realised—the extreme youth of the beginner at this arduous game. The heroine in this case went for her first audition at 14 and got into the chorus at the tender age of 16 years! An excellent contrast was provided in the reminiscences of the grandmother, a chorus-girl also in her day, when dancing alone was required, and a girl didn't have to provide good looks, dancing



ability, and a singing voice as well. I imagine most listeners would be left, as I was, with the conviction that there must be easier ways of making a living. In other words, "Don't put your daughter on the stage!"

The Eternal Woman

ONLY the blindest of blind optimism could have induced me to tune in to a recent talk entitled "What Shall I Wear?" with any hope of having the question answered. But alas, such is feminine faith, and I was soon disillusioned. Admittedly, this talk was the first of a series, and in the nature of a

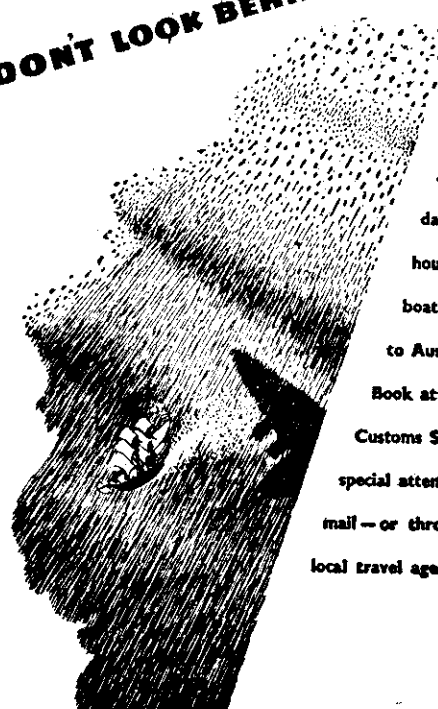


preparatory remark. But surely it's a little hard for the would-be glamour-seeker to be instructed in the first breath to knock off steamed puddings—so unglamorous? And even more trying for those whose particular figure problem would seem to demand a diet of steamed puddings. Again, our figures having been disposed of, we are advised to dress plainly. "Plain clothes for plain people," we quote to ourselves—and anyway, how does she know we aren't glamorous? (The answer to this comes rather forcibly—we wouldn't be listening if we were.) But next talk, notwithstanding, will no doubt find us listening in again—and that in spite of what is probably a universal conviction that for our income we are as well-dressed as anyone could be.

Hobson's Choice

IN spite of good production and a convincing Lancashire accent I found my interest in *Hobson's Choice* flagging long before the end of this hour-and-a-quarter performance. This may be a damaging admission on my part; but the play seemed to need the extra stimulus of stage production to save it from dragging. The accent, too, seemed to be frequently maintained at the expense of expression, which told in a play of this length. But all things considered, it was listening time well spent. The "boomp-tious" Maggie dominated the scene from the first and there was as much tragedy in her uppishness and all it implied as there was comedy. Willie's performance was a particularly fine one, and the scene where Maggie proposes to him a gem—although I doubt whether "propose" is the right word, as it implies some choice. This was not a play to choose for easy production, and on all counts it was a very creditable performance. I hope that other plays from the same part of the world are forthcoming so that the acquired dialect need not be wasted.

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