

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Place Programmes

LISTENING to *Inner Suburb*—one of the BBC "This is London" series from 2YA the other Wednesday, I felt a certain nostalgia for the parallel local series of place programmes which we heard from 2YA not very long ago in which recordings made by the NZBS mobile unit on location were combined into a session which aimed to give some idea of the social and historic background of the district. This programme on Hampstead was very, very good, as you would expect of a BBC-conducted tour. And so many famous people have lived in Hampstead that there could be no shortage of cultural and historical material. Keats lived here, Shelley took walks on the Heath, Blake maligned the climate, and Hogarth expressed his appreciation in practical manner by buying the Old Bull and Bush. On Hampstead Heath Karl Marx rode a donkey for the edification of his family, and Constable, looking down on London from its heights, formulated his intention of painting "light, dews, breezes, bloom and freshness." A landscape so peopled with familiar figures could not remain remote even to a listener 12,000 miles away. On the other hand (to come very near to home) I could not help thinking how immediate and vivid would be the impact of a similar NZBS programme on Karori, with suitable infusions of culture from Katherine Mansfield's *Journal*.

The Man Without a Mask

WITHOUT having read Dr. Bronowski's book on William Blake, it is, perhaps, risky to assume after hearing *The Man Without a Mask* that this is rather a triumph of potting. But I suspect that it is. The general effect may have been rather one of incoherency, out of which Blake's intense faith and purpose stood like a landmark. But any attempt to round it off into a neat and finished whole would have lost in veracity as much as in force. A good deal of attention was given in the programme to the events of Blake's time, without which any understanding of the man and his work becomes difficult. The quotations were well chosen and the space allotted to them generous. All in all I thought it the best biographical study I have heard over the air.

In Fleet Street

A RECENT instalment of *This Sceptred Isle* (2YA, Sunday mornings) dealt with Fleet Street, and formed an interesting contrast to Mr. Jefferson's Friday night talks on the London Popular Press. Whereas Mr. Jefferson knows his Fleet Street inside out the Sceptred Isle scriptwriter gives the impression of knowing it only from the outside looking in; whereas for Mr. Jefferson the romance of Fleet Street is implicit in its everydayness the Sceptred Isle gentleman sees the concept in capitals and quotes, and the whole pageant of Fleet Street's history moving towards the splendid culmination of the present day. If you like a plummy programme you will prefer the double-length, double-strength BBC feature, although little Virginia, to whom the programme is addressed, may prove a little hard to stomach, and I felt that her presence was a bar to our hearing any but the

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more elevated anecdotes of Fleet Street. To be sure we did hear about Mr. Hannen Swaffer having his face publicly smacked by one of Mr. Cochran's Young Ladies because he had said she was a bad actress, but the incident was used not for its own sake but to illustrate the fact that Mr. Swaffer was another of the many martyrs who "help to fight the grim battle of the Freedom of the Press."

Radio Ghosts

HOW useful J. Jefferson Farjeon is to the programme arranger, with his nice blend of the familiar and the grotesque, the terrifying and the tongue-in-cheek, the calculated understatement and consequent over-stimulation! On a recent Monday night I listened to "Supper is Served" which, set in the usual lonely inn with the usual pawn to K4 opening, "Do you believe in ghosts?" made very effective use of meagre rations in the shape of a squint-eyed portrait and a plate of stew. The conveying of the more subtle types of menace seems particularly germane to radio, since there is more chance of catching the victim alone than is possible for the horror film or the horror play, and the spoken word is so much more convincing than the written one. Those experiments in radio hypnotism in Australia, moreover, are proof of the susceptibility of the average listener. And I am more than ever convinced that the first-person narrative form is a much more potent weapon for listener subjugation than the dramatic form, for to eavesdrop on the shiversome experiences of a group is by no means as upsetting as to have an intimate voice whispering, "This happened to me!"

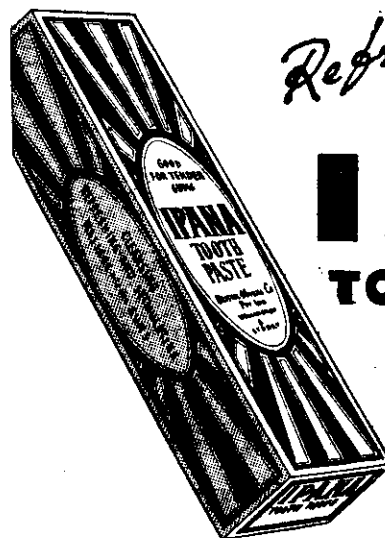
Beneath The Stars

IT was a little bold of 3ZB to choose this particular season to wax starry-eyed over the joys of sleeping out. I wonder if the compiler of this particular "Landscape in Words and Music" has indulged his fancy for sleeping beneath the stars recently. The stillness of the night on which he dwells, for instance, with the cows lowing in the distance and "the small noises of birds" is a pretty fallacy at any time; and not so pretty when the cows are chewing viciously at the tent ropes, and the entire complement of neighbouring farm dogs is baying the moon. But to give him his due, this scriptwriter's memory has not failed him altogether. He recalls—a little incongruously with the romantic flavour of the rest—that slumber on tussock grass is not as peaceful and profound beneath the stars as one might be led to believe. I suspect, too, that his star-gazing has been the consequences of insomnia, and not merely a pleasant alternative to sleep.



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