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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### With a Hop, Skip and Jump

FROM Prehistoric Times to the French Revolution in 15 minutes was the amazing feat of Dorothy Freed, the first talk of whose series *Women in Politics* I heard from 2YA on a recent Tuesday morning. Which goes to prove Mrs. Freed's thesis that up till now it's been a man's world, since no one dealing with "Men in Politics" could have covered the ground so speedily even



though equipped with seven-century boots, since each step would undoubtedly land the lecturer in some, particularly tenacious political morass. Mrs. Freed has so far not needed to do more than skim the surface of the political field, since for all practical purposes women have had no part to play, but I feel it was perhaps an over-simplification of the Greek scene to consign the wives to the gynaeceum and disregard completely the part played by the *heterae* in political affairs. And I rather begrudge the minute or so spent on M. Porcius ("Who knows where it will end?") Cato whereas Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi, that noblest Roman matron of them all, gets no mention. Which proves what is after all the essential point, that if you want a talk on *Women in Politics Up to the French Revolution* to have any human interest at all you have to include a few men.

### Off Tap

THE special commemoration feature of the Royal wedding which 2YA broadcast on a recent Sunday afternoon seemed to me to illustrate the evils of emotion recollected in tranquillity. The whole thing was pitched at rather too high a key; the occasion, instead of being reported factually and directly, as was the case with the actual wedding broadcast, was seen afresh in the subsequent light of a rose-coloured mist, whereas the rose-coloured mist should have been glimpsed on the far side of the events themselves. Sir Lewis Casson, who covered the ceremony in the Abbey, was the worst offender. With spectacles fogged by emotion he saw the bride as "a sweet misty white figure hanging a shade tremulously on the arm of His Majesty the King," though he was able to wipe his glasses in time for a meticulous observation of the bridal gown. . . . Nor were commentators unable to escape a strangely naive wonder at the dignity of the proceedings. Says Sir Lewis: "The bridal procession moves with simple dignity up the long aisle." The commentator at the West Door (sorry, the Great West Door) says that the young couple "are carrying themselves with a simple dignity

that brings a lump to many a throat and an unashamed tear to many an eye." I was moved to reflect that in the circumstances only undignified behaviour could be said to have news value. Yet this special commemoration programme was by no means lacking in virtue. The music was worth a second hearing. And there was a very felicitous reconstruction of Queen Victoria's wedding day (Sybil Thorndike played Victoria) which almost did bring a lump to the throat and a tear to the eye. A probable explanation of my failure to respond to the main part of the programme lies in the fact that the non-poetic are unable to recollect previous emotional responses in the tranquillity induced by two months or more of abstinence.

### Approval Granted

SINCE wit is the essence of his work the comedies of Frederick Lonsdale seem particularly well suited to radio presentation, and furthermore have this advantage—that no one is likely to take artistic umbrage at the necessary compression into the Radio Theatre's pre-ordained life span of one hour. It may be a serious matter to have your beer rationed, but nobody minds very much if they cut down the froth on top. On *Approval*, which I heard from 2YA on a recent Friday, was entertaining if not sustaining, but with the courage of its convictions succeeded in being very entertaining indeed. Of course I, in common, perhaps, with the majority of listeners, was equipped with the Seeing Eye of one who has attended two film versions, so that behind the fatuous niceness of Richard's conversation I could sense the benevolent glint of Ralph Lynn's eyeglass and, hearing Maria, could see how the acid of her tongue had etched pettish lines between Yvonne Arnaud's nose and mouth. I should have enjoyed *On Approval* in any case, but previous knowledge gave me my nearest approach to the joys of television.

### Belated Tribute

THIS is a very belated tribute to a broadcaster who for a long time past has been nothing but a name to me. I can't advance a reason why I have not switched on Tusitala before (possibly because the printed programmes don't always state details of his broadcasts, and I like to know what I am to hear as well as who), but having heard him for the first time I am annoyed at the number of good yarns I must have missed. The one I heard from 4ZB was about a diver—not the marine sort in goggles and suit, but a swimmer who took a plunge into a bathing pool and didn't emerge again. He did this several times, it seems, vanishing into the water like a ghost, much to the perturbation of the one observer who saw him do it. The denouement of this tale was less exciting than its beginning; the incident was explained away as a provision of approaching disaster, leaving the listener with the feeling that the same story has been written many times before. But I thought the narrator "one out of the box," a speaker with an easy,

(continued on next page)