

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Richard

"OPEN the Door, Richard," is likely to prove fatal to the peace of mind of any musician who hears it—and it seems that none of us can escape exposure to its deadly virus. To change the metaphor, it is one of those things (I cannot find it in myself to dignify it by the title of "tune") which stick in the mind like burrs and return to torment the sleepless in the early hours. This short eight-bar phrase is expanded to make one whole side of a record, and before it has been played through, the tale of a disobliging friend has developed into a saga of ever-increasing anger and furious frustration. Mark Twain recognised the genius of all such jingles when he wrote his essay on the doggerel suggested to him by the printed directions to tram-conductors, thereby keeping not only himself, but his unfortunate readers awake at nights. Recent examples of this exasperating type of thing are "Chickery Chick" and "Mairzy Doats"—but at least these nonsensical rhymes do admit of logical explanation, whereas we are never likely to penetrate to the real reason (jokes apart) as to Why Richard Didn't Open the Door. One consolation remains: most of the immediately popular tunes have an extremely brief life-span, and I predict the early demise of Richard, even if his ghost returns for a while to haunt us.

Well Jelled

FAREWELL, HELEN, by C. Gordon Glover, was one of these radio plays that leave the listener in an emotional jelly and the critic with scarcely a word to say for himself. Fortunately or unfortunately they don't hit the air very often—fortunately perhaps, since frequent listening would result in over-stimulation, and to listen on three consecutive nights would be the emotional equivalent of a three-day jag. No, much better to exist on a wholesome dramatic diet of easily-digested murders and reinforced romance. Mr. Glover has the knack of involving numbers of his listeners in his emotional wringer, since his themes are (generally speaking) universal ones, but manages to render the wringing process rather less painful by diverting his hearers with the brightness of his conversation. (Imagine your dentist has the wit of a Wilde.) It is of course possible to pick flaws in *Farewell, Helen* (no woman who liked bijou flats with chromium furniture would hang "The Garden of Innocence" on her wall), but this is mere quibbling. Most other radio playwrights win my admiration by presenting me with a novel plot and a surprise ending. I feel there is even more to admire in Mr. Glover's uncanny ability to make me feel emotionally and artistically satisfied without what I had always regarded as the necessary *coup de grâce* of a conclusion.

Anti-Social

BRIGHT spots that promise novelty in the programmes are landmarks to the regular radio fan—to be heavily scored in the current *Listener*, and on no account to be missed. When three such sessions in a week slide by unheard owing to the vagaries of friends and family, it gives one, as the French say, furiously to think. Something is

wrong somewhere—even politeness has its limits. There are those who can follow the furnishing problems of Dave and Mabel of Snake Gully with one ear, and the domestic trials of Mrs. Next-Door with the other—and register a suitable expression of interested sympathy to boot. But such versatility is



beyond most of us. Elementary good manners forbid us to sit and snigger happily at Handley's sallies while our guests freeze into a bored silence. It is a difficult problem, and it is high time some method was evolved for dealing with it. Dearly as we love our friends, and carefully as we choose them, there are bound to be times when they come between us and our radio. The only solution that has presented itself to date (its defects are obvious), is to bolt the door, turn out the light, and be to all intents and purposes, and to all visitors, "Not At Home."

Much-Binding

IN spite of its name *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh* comes, in my estimate, nowhere near the first rank in humorous entertainment. Perhaps that is a little unfair: after all, its flavour is distinctly a wartime one, and must inevitably have lost whatever freshness it had when it first emerged from its scavenger hunt in the scrapheap of old wisecracks. The jokes are long in the tooth and long in the telling. One sees them coming and one yawns—not because they are bad jokes but because they are very tired ones by the time they get here. I was tired, too, by the time Coster had finished hypnotising Murdoch and Horne into saying how beautiful he was, almost as tired as Coster must have been. As a flesh and blood show, this feature would probably go over very well, but on the air it lacks the necessary speed of attack that gives a radio performance its sparkle. I must admit that I would like to have seen Coster teaching Rita to do the "backside kick" he learnt in dancing class. One of the best humorous programmes, on rather a smaller scale than Tommy Handley's and Charlie Chester's, was the *Bing Crosby Show*, where the cracks flew with a most convincing spontaneity. I was very sorry to hear the last of this series.

Proof of the Pudding

TILL THE END OF TIME, 2ZB's Friday night feature on the lives of great composers, is culture administered under a light anaesthetic, music doped (continued on next page)



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