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RADIO VIEWSREEL

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up with romance (in its two-fold interpretation as female interest and as tall story). Moussorgski, on a recent Friday, was fairly typical of what I have heard in this series. Artfully, the programme arranger takes up his position in the St. Petersburg of 1881, on the day of Moussorgski's funeral. He overhears the comments of four of the spectators whose lives have been closely linked with Moussorgski's—his colonel, his sweetheart, an impresario, a musical colleague—and from these viewpoints we reconstruct the composer's life. But I have always felt that the composer's life-story is even less important for the understanding of his works than the poet's or the artist's; the average listener interprets a musical composition in terms of his own experience rather than the composer's. And the musical plums imbedded in the programme (the sardonic gusto of "Song of the Flea," the blithe realism of the "Cossack Dance") seemed as haphazardly placed and as different in texture from their matrix as the threepences in the Christmas pudding. But let us not, on this account, underestimate the pudding itself. It was the very stuff of which good radio programmes are made, a little on the sweet side, perhaps, but good, emotionally rich listening. (Though I refuse to believe that the colonel actually said "Damme, sir, I want no namby-pamby milk-and-water-drinking mother's boys in my regiment" and ordered the 18-year-old Moussorgski to drink diurnally half a bottle of vodka and a full bottle of champagne. Damme, it's too much.)

High Levels

IN these columns recently I mentioned the serial *H. M. Stanley, Explorer*, which has just finished from 4ZB. A fast-moving adventurous tale of African exploits, it was vastly superior to the run-of-the-mill serial in which the passions of fictitious characters are torn to tatters for the benefit of emotional listeners. But, in contrast, how immensely superior again was the BBC production *On the Mountain*, which was described as "a fantasy on the life of David Livingstone." In the ZB serial, Livingstone was a mere myth, the distant goal of Stanley's journeying, and had no real life of his own; except, of course, that he was permitted to appear for a brief instant in the final episode, in order that he might reply to the famous question, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" The BBC programme, in half an hour, made Livingstone a more real figure than the ZB serial could make of Stanley in a whole series of episodes. The programme on Livingstone was well described as a fantasia, the elements which were used in its production being skilfully treated with almost contrapuntal technique. The names of the romantic African places—village, river, lake—the true Scots voice which spoke Livingstone's part, the readings from diaries and notes in the utterances of a poet deeply imbued with the beatific vision, all combined in terrific crescendo

to the climax where the rhythm of the native drums and the dying man's voice coincided in a religious fervour; then the sudden contrast of the quiet voice repeating "I am so cold." Thoughtfully and lovingly written, well-produced, *On the Mountain* gave us an unforgettable portrait of an unforgettable man.

Frank Comment

PICTURE PARADE, a BBC feature sub-titled "A frank comment on the film world," seems to be one of those unheralded but good things which live up our usual listening by presenting something just a little different. I have heard only one of these programmes (I hope there will be more), and therefore cannot generalise; but if future instalments are as good as the first, this will be worth the while of any film-going listener. Although it deals with films, it is not the usual thinly-disguised advertisement which we hear from the commercial stations; nor is it that rather boring and childish fan-session which tells all about the flights and fancies of favourite film-stars (a session which is worse than any straight-out advertisement—for the advertisement does tell us, albeit in always glowing terms, what the film is all about). *Picture Parade* discusses films from an intelligent person's angle. In the feature which I heard, points under presentation included the music for *Henry V.*, certain scenes from *Colonel Blimp*, and a rather acid criticism of a certain type of cinema in London. I hope this programme represents the thin edge of a wedge, and that the criticisms will extend finally to the films themselves. The only disadvantage about that would be that criticism of films couldn't help us if we had already seen them, as we probably would have done by the time the BBC recordings reached us. Intelligent film criticism from our own stations, I suppose, is an innovation unlikely to happen; but we have had book-discussions as a regular radio feature so long that we are quite used to hearing the written word analysed for us, and it seems a logical principle to extend such discussions to other arts, as music, painting and films.

Closure

WITH regret I notice that *This Correspondence Must Now Cease* has now ceased from 2YA, leaving listeners filled with nostalgia for those spacious days when the laws of libel were looser than they are to-day, when there were places other than the floor of the House for the coining and hurling of opprobrious epithets. Last in the series was the controversy between Byron and Lord Elgin on the subject of the Elgin marbles in which Byron may be considered to have won on points (a rhymed barb sticks longer, and Lord Elgin never achieved anything so ungentlemanly as Byron's "filthy jackal" or "fixed statue on the pedestal of scorn") but in which Lord Elgin ultimately carried off the victor's £35,000 purse and achieved honourable mention in the editorial column of *The Times*. This series of programmes was of great

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