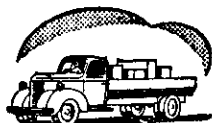


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# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Vanitas Vanitatum

STATION 2ZB's Sunday night *Playhouse of Favourites* is biting off more than it can chew. It makes an excellent job of its dramatizations of the short story (De Maupassant's *The Piece of String* and Stevenson's *The Suicide Club* were two I recently enjoyed), but its attempts to deal with full-length play or novel must lead to gross distortion. Last Sunday's *Vanity Fair* was a dreadful example of this *brevitas brevitatum*. Becky herself emerges from the paring process still recognisable in appearance, and somewhat improved in moral character (there is no time to dwell upon her baser thoughts or her meaner actions) even if diminished in literary stature, and the Hollywood sweetness of her voice (incidentally, did she ever say "Hold me tight, tight, George?") supports the illusion that she is puppet rather than puppeteer. In furtherance of Thackeray's claim that *Vanity Fair* is a novel without a hero the worthy Dobbin has been eliminated, and it all boils down to a variation of the E.T. with Becky at the apex, and Rawdon, George and Lord Steyne jockeying for position on the base-line.

### All Our Brains Commend Him

HAVING heard Donald McCullough for the first time for some years (it seems a long time since 2YA relayed recordings of the BBC Brains Trust) I am prepared to endorse all the nice things that prompter-pens-than-mine have found to say about him. He is that rare thing on National, as opposed to Commercial networks, a microphone personality, and as I listened to *What Would You Say* on a recent Monday night the thought occurred to me that in a previous incarnation (perhaps a little too previous?) he might have been one of those successful Edwardian hostesses encountered in memoirs of the period. Gracefully he welcomed and gracefully introduced his "scintillating selection of agricultural intellects." Taking his place as usual at the head of the table he brought forward, one by one, apt topics of conversation, topics designed to show off becomingly his guests' several talents, and to provide good listening as well as good exposition. His personality was strong enough to ensure that most of the conversation was general, but not so quelling as to prevent the occasional riposte between players of opposing views. His the will-o'-the-wisp remark that rescued the speaker bogged in deep waters, his the anchor that pinned down the speech that showed tendency to drift from the prescribed shore. And though our Edwardian hostess could not conceivably have been placed in the impossible position of imposing a strict time-limit upon her luncheon-party I feel sure that if so placed her apologies could not have been more graceful.

### We Finish Looking

MRS. LOIS SUCKLING'S talk "Women in Business" provided a militant finale to the memorable series *Let's Look at Ourselves*, from which listeners to 2YA have received so much intellectual nourishment. Proceeding allegretto vivace Mrs. Suckling covered a large plot of ground in something under the usual 15 minutes, a technique

nicely in keeping with her exhortation to listeners to "give up the idea that women are news." Actually we appear to be in no danger of doing so, since 2YA has now embarked on a series of talks by Mrs. Williams-Ellis on *The Art of Being a Woman*, and personally I hope that we never do, since there is nothing more enjoyable than forming the topic of conversation (men are said



to have the same weakness, hence the success of the let-him-talk-about-himself technique) especially when, as in the case of a radio talk, the speaker may be bracing (as Mrs. Suckling) but can never be downright rude. I enjoyed meeting Grandmother, and felt sorry that she was not entirely satisfied with the present position of women in the business world, as viewed in the light of the high hopes indulged in by her own generation. But I felt that both Grandmother and the speaker, eyeing only the exploited among women in business, tended to take a gloomier view of the position than would have been warranted had they also considered the large number of women who run businesses of their own, to whom the principle of equal pay for equal work certainly does apply. - Contrariwise it was perhaps optimistic to assume that if sufficient community services are available to enable women to continue paid employment after marriage, that great argument against women in business—their impermanence—would be invalid, since I feel sure that women in general are intelligent enough to prefer the life of delicious leisure which community services allied to domesticity can give them to the privilege of permanence in office, factory, or shop.

### Time Off

I SOMETIMES wonder just how many radio programmes I would listen to if I weren't a commentator. I have no doubt that many to which I now listen with pleasure would still figure on my list; that some to which I now listen in their entirety would be switched off halfway through, that others which now would be best described as "forced listening," and which I hear only for the sake of comparison, would figure on that other "little list" of things better omitted. I wouldn't listen to the news, for one thing—I can grasp from newspaper headlines as much in five minutes as the nine o'clock reader could tell me in twenty; nevertheless, the news is one thing I don't begrudge other people who aren't as near to a newspaper as I am. Talks? Well, about one a week would be the limit, but each and every discussion group would find me listening, as it does now. Since the output of the best radio dramatists is necessarily limited, I wouldn't even expect to get

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