

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Norfolk Island Programme

THE title of the new ZB Sunday night programme *Isle of the Singing Pines* suggests that Norfolk Island will ultimately be for the New Zealand lyricist what Hawaii is to the American. But that day has not yet come, and Bryan O'Brien was content in the first of the three programmes to consider the romance of the past rather than the romance (le'd girls, muted dance music from the tourist hotel) of Norfolk Island's probable future. There are so many stories in the island's past that are worth the telling, even though these may evoke incredulous horror from gently-nurtured listeners, for in this rough island's story the path of duty trodden so inescapably by both convicts and warders was a trifle gory. Bryan O'Brien is an excellent storyteller, and if on occasion he succumbed to the lure of the literary phrase ("A vision of verdant loveliness met our wondering gaze"; "the giant tree lifting beseeching arms to the sky") he more than made up for it by the deep and sincere emotion that spoke in his narrative as he trod his *via dolorosa* from Bloody Bridge to Headstone.

Crumbling Edifice

THE last of the *Family* talks I heard from 2YA was Dr. Eleanor Mears's *Husband and Wife*, and the thing that impressed me most about it was the extreme melancholy of Dr. Mears's delivery and outlook. And looking back over the series I realised that this attitude was not confined to Dr. Mears, that, with the possible exception of two talks on child upbringing, they had



all been somewhat defeatist. The family ain't what it used to be. Children (paradoxically enough) haven't the same chance now that there aren't so many of them. The Family is no longer a sound economic unit, and with the dissolution of economic partnership the bonds of family inevitably loosen. . . . Women now don't put as much into marriage as they did before other careers were open to them. . . . Modern marriages tend to break if the woman has a career outside the home. . . . Marriages tend to break if the woman has no outside interests. But though most of the speakers seemed to think that family life was getting more and more complicated and less and less satisfactory there was no suggestion that we should relax our efforts to bolster up the crumbling edifice, scrap it altogether or have something else instead. The Old Grey Mare she ain't

what she used to be, but a few injections of applied psychology will keep her going for some time yet. And none of our speakers would dream of trading her in for one of these new-fangled gas buggies.

By the Short Hair

ON a Sunday morning 9.30 is a good time to listen to 2YA, as then many BBC programmes seem to arrive, like baby dear, out of the nowhere into the here. It was purely by chance that I came across *Queen Victoria Was Furious*, and last week by chance I found a delightfully satiric little operetta called *A Garland of Beards*, being a history of famous, infamous, and merely anonymous beards. The whole thing was done in the grand manner, and no ingenuity had been spared in the creation of a libretto that W. S. Gilbert could have acknowledged without a blush (except for his beardlessness). Throughout the operetta proper were the most ridiculously conceived prose divertissements — one interlude reported in test-match commentary manner a marathon innings of Dr. W. G. Grace, which lasted so long that the fieldsmen fell asleep and the umpire, similarly unconscious, gave him out L.B.W.; another related the ridiculous story of a man who had his beard pulled in 1892 for failing to pay the caddy; and thus was rung the knell of "the bosom, bustle, and the beard." For hereafter, in spite of a brief period of resurgence during the war years, the beard was destined to be cut off daily well before its prime, and no more permitted to "take its place, On every large and lovely face, Nor with its cosy shade begin, To clothe an amplitude of chin." It is strange to me that programmes as extravagantly, as wittily nonsensical as this should be aired in a comparatively unfrequented corner of the programmes.

Bridging the Gulf

ONE of the hardest gaps to bridge, in the arranging of radio programmes, must be the gap between the lowest brow and the highest. In between the corny popular song-hits and the intellectuality of Bach's greatest works there exists a chasm which not all the non-descript refuse of mediocre composers, not all the appealing minor classics nor the best modern jazz can hope to fill. So, too, in between Shakespeare and soap-opera exists a similar chasm, and the endeavour to bridge it with plays that are neither boring nor cheap must be a programme-arranger's continual nightmare. Every week some play appears which seeks to appeal to that vast unseen audience which doesn't understand Ibsen and yet has had enough of the Lone Ranger and his kind. Most of these "in-between" dramas, once heard, sink into the oblivion which they court. Occasionally, however, one or two are



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