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RADIO VIEWSREEL What Our Commentators Say

Trustification of Brains

MR. DONALD McCULLOUGH is now engaged in a series of talks from 2YA—*Behind the Brains Trust*—and last Tuesday's was devoted to practical suggestions for harnessing brains for various worthy objects such as the raising of money, the purveying of entertainment, the dissemination of knowledge, and the promotion of social activity. But quite apart from the dozens of little Brains Banks (Trust seems too ambitious a word for our local combine) which will spring up overnight, like Mr. O'Brien's luminous Norfolk Island toadstools, as a direct result of Mr. McCullough's talk, Mr. McCullough will be entitled to assume some credit for the many Discussions, Open Forums, Let's Have It Out and Answer Please sessions which pepper the programmes at the present time. That we have so far been unsuccessful in evolving anything as comfortably woolly as the BBC Brains Trust is perhaps the fault of a climate which shows us things in clearer outline and leaves less scope for speculation, and of a soil which breeds chairmen to whom life is real and earnest (though Mr. Wadman is coming along nicely).

Golden Age

ZILLAH and Ronald Castle have begun from 2YA on Tuesday evenings at 7.30 p.m. a series of recitals of music of the early 18th Century, played on period instruments. These instrumentalists have been indefatigable in their cultivation of this neglected corner of the garden of music, and if we are to judge by the first broadcast the whole series will be most interesting. The first gave two sonatas, one for viola d'amore and the other for treble recorder both with harpsichord, the first by Ariosti and the second by L'Oeillet. The gentle antique flavour of the instruments fell pleasantly on the ear, and the playing was most competent, though I fancy Miss Castle's vibrato was not authentic 18th Century. The introductory remarks set several traps for the announcer, who finally introduced us to a new instrument, the "traverse flute"—an ideal instrument for the musical surveyor.

Two Plays

HAVING fallen for the Newer Look in radio drama on Wednesday night with C. Gordon Glover's *Farewell, Captain Jacoby*, I found myself quite ready to go back to the old when it came to Friday night's radio version of *Riders to the Sea*. The two plays formed an interesting contrast, the one making use of all the new techniques of flash-back, detour, bypass, and follow-through to tell its story, and the other following closely the original text. And both were equally effective in the telling, though as a production *Riders to the Sea* could have been improved. The sea was not all-pervasive, like Lion it would sometimes roar, sometimes forget its cue. The Heavenly Choir often rushed in where it should have feared to tread. And keening, to the Anglo-Saxon ear, is unconvincing. Yet in spite of this

the play was emotionally and aesthetically valid. In *Farewell, Captain Jacoby* there was a much closer union between means and ends, and the fine feathers Mr. Glover specialises in were firmly woven into the plot. This is as close as I have heard Mr. Glover get to the heart of the aspidistra (the story is set in a Victorian drawing room wherein the supposed Captain Jacoby is courting the girl he loves prior to his incarceration for fraud) and he has a wonderful time rustling the leaves.

The Devil We Don't Know

THAT the devil we don't know is much more interesting than the devil we do was indicated by my reactions to two crime programmes this week, *Secrets of Scotland Yard* from 2ZB on Friday, and John Dickson Carr's *The Devil in the Summerhouse* from 2YC the following Sunday. The secrets of Scotland Yard are authentic case histories, related by Clive Brook with dreadful matter-of-factness—the cheerful unconcern of a butcher who does not believe in reincarnation wrapping up lamb-chops. Real-life murderers, we gather from these programmes, are moved by baser motives and are less subtle in execution than their fictional counterparts, and hearing about them is neither particularly edifying nor particularly pleasant. But the average radio whodunit is so contrived and artificial that the sudden death in it bears as little relation to the real thing as coconut shells to horses' hooves, and it is thus possible to relax and enjoy it. *The Devil in the Summerhouse* was a very good thriller, its atmosphere suitably murky (the retrospective voices were the wee-est bit creepy) but intellectually as clear as day. But I disagreed with Dr. Fell that the most important clue was the hat. My guess was the body.

The Great Partnership

THE last episode from 4YA in the series *Gilbert and Sullivan, the Story of a Great Partnership* was one of the most effective. It dealt with *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *The Gondoliers*, and the last operas; with the open rift in the friendship of the partners, and



the famous "carpet quarrel," the last straw which broke the back of the partnership. It is seldom that such a connected effort is obtained in a series of productions heard at intervals of a fortnight. The effect of smooth-flowing continuity in the series was due to several factors. First, an entire hour was allowed for each episode; second, no