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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

After Handley

THOSE who used to follow up *ITMA* might do well, when it finishes its run in New Zealand, to transfer allegiance to "Much-Binding-in-the Marsh." For one thing, it is similar enough in type, being typically English, to the Tommy Handley show to please most devotees of that session; but also it has an air of originality which stamps it as the product of a slightly different, more restrained and placid school of humour. Notable among its characters is Sam Costa, who often lends an air of complete unreality to the proceedings by responding to a perfectly normal query about his wife's health with some such malapropism as "That's very necromantic of you, sir." Costa's expression, "Very curious," is also worthy of note, and the mistake is never made of introducing it too often, or in an inappropriate place in the script. The only fault I find with "Much-Binding" is the musical interludes. I know well enough that musicians with a taste for satire have been spoiled by the "arrangements" in *ITMA*, those indescribable confections which were quite impossible of imitation. But we go to the other extreme in "Much-Binding," where Gwen Catley, a soprano with a clear and lovely voice, sings inappropriate drawing-room ballads about birds and springtime. These may be all right in the "light" section of a musical half-hour, but they are quite out-of-keeping when used as relief between the spots of dialogue and nonsense in a humorous programme.

Still Some Thrillers

I THINK we have reason to be grateful for the time-lag that insulates us from the immediate effects of happenings abroad. The BBC ban on certain kinds of thrillers, for example, will take some time to come into effect, and meanwhile we have the chance to enjoy *A Nice Cup of Tea*, and other productions of similarly high quality. Last Wednesday I heard two half-hour plays from 2YA, the NZBS *Mr. Jericho* (an extravagant farce about a man who loses his voice and gets it back so squeaky that it shatters glass) and the *Nice Cup of Tea*, and it seems to me that any comparison between radio thriller and radio farce must result in a victory for the former. Half-an-hour is too short a time for a radio audience (limited to the one sense) to develop an interest in character, which means that plots must be based upon incident. Death being a most significant incident, audiences tend to pay more attention to whodunits than to stories of gentlemen who shatter glass at every word, or sprout wings at every abstinence from alcoholic liquor. Moreover, the discipline of thriller-writing, despite unaesthetic aspects of the subject matter, makes for an austere shapelessness in the finished product particularly gratifying to those who embrace the functional in art.

Clear Thinking

THE morning talks from 4YA have improved so much recently that it is becoming imperative to arrange morning tea for ten sharp. One of the best talks was Renate Rex on "What is There About New Zealand?" She spoke her perfect English with just enough hint of a foreign language to make the listener aware that her statements about New Zealand were the result of her own observation as a new settler here. She gently chided disgruntled immigrants who can't like New Zealand because it isn't exactly like "home," wherever "home" may be, and she hoped all such would realise that they were indulging in wishful thinking if they expected an earthly paradise in a land peopled with plain men and women without wings sprouting from their pull-overs. These are the people who complain because letters are not delivered to the door, because our University colleges are not Oxford or Cambridge, because they can't get servants or buy on Saturday anything they forgot to get on Friday. With a glance of mingled pity and disdain, the speaker left these people to stew in their own juice and sleep in beds they had themselves made, and passed on to a more constructive view. She pointed out what we do have in New Zealand, good food, healthy atmosphere, material prosperity and a simple and unhurried pace of living—a splendid basis, surely, on which to build the Utopia dreamed of by native New Zealanders and recent settlers alike. Intellectuals who complained of cultural loneliness, she suggested, must defeat pessimism by banding together to create that culture which seems now so lacking, or so thinly-spread that it is little more than a veneer. This talk in itself, as an example of clear, unbiased, optimistic thinking, was one worthy of being heard, not alone on a Friday morning, but from all stations at a quarter-to-nine on Sunday evening; and I wish I could quote it in its entirety.

Bach and Friend

IT was of interest to hear two trio sonatas by Bach and his contemporary Telemann recently. In spite of the announcer's somewhat patronising reference to Telemann as a composer who, while he thought himself in the forefront of modernity, yet missed the bus of posterity, so triumphantly caught by the die-hard Bach, the two trios by no means bore out the comparison. Indeed, I liked the Telemann better than the Bach. They were played by Francis Rosner (violin), James Hopkinson (flute) and Wainwright Morgan (piano). The playing of all three has given me much pleasure in the past; on this occasion, however, I found it insensitive to the point of woodenness. The feeling for the sequences in the Telemann was lost completely, and the Bach was broadcast with a monotonous uniformity of tone

(continued on next page)

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