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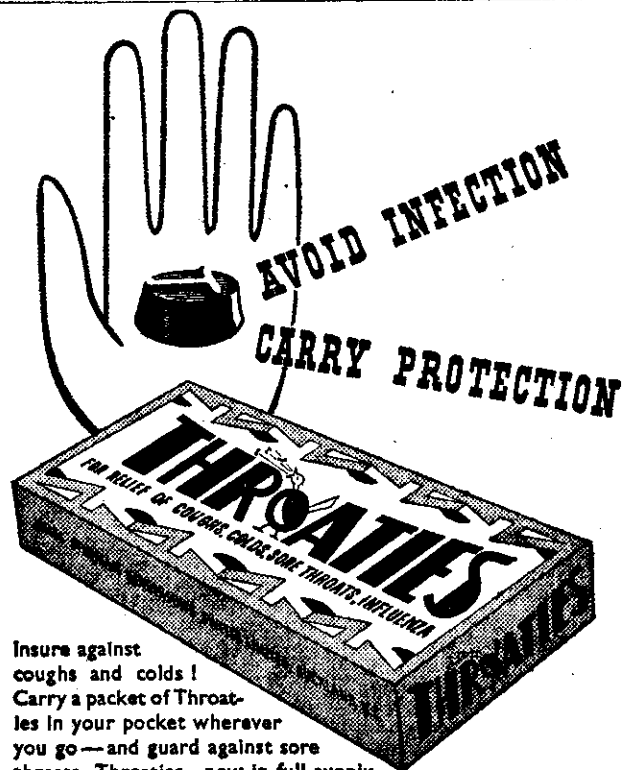
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T.A.10

Radio Review

TALKING OF BOOKS...

"OF making many books there is no end." If true when written, how much more apt these words are to-day when tablet has given way to typewriter, papyrus to printing press, when Ecclesiastical simplicity is replaced by the more devious rhythms of Freud or Marx, when in varying degrees most men have acquired scholarship and, in the midst of all their running, still find time to read. Preoccupation with books is part and parcel of modern living. Consequently, a few months ago, ZB Book Review got off to a flying start.

The pattern is fairly simple. Four books are reviewed by four speakers, while groups of not-so-important works are dealt with by a chairman. Over two hundred books have been received and over one hundred and thirty reviewed since February. No book is taken at random, but all are chosen with an eye to worth and general interest. Books and the job of chairman are given to as many different people as possible. "Names" are culled mainly from educational and writing circles, while experts in other fields are called in from time to time. A pleasing standard of delivery and subject matter has been achieved, although occasionally the pattern becomes a little ragged.

An expert who can write clearly on his own subject is not always good over the air. An author, no matter how well he puts thought on paper, cannot always attract interest through voice alone. In cases like these it might be better to have the script written by the expert and spoken by someone else. No matter how "cultural" a session may be in intent, its first aim must be to hold listener-interest. No song and dance or funny patter is asked for or expected in *Book Review*, but where giving and receiving are done by a voice on one side of the microphone and an ear on the other, a certain amount of showmanship is essential. At times, too, we strike a dull patch when all four books are on the heavy side. A little juggling of reviews here would give a more balanced diet.

These on the debit side. On the credit—a session which has stimulated interest from the first broadcast. With a great many people, tuning in to *Book Review* on Sunday evening is now as routine as chatting about it during Monday morning tea, a sure sign that the session is "alive." Small details of criticism apart, *Book Review*, *Citizens' Forum*, *Sunday Supplement* and similar sessions are all broadcasts with which the average intelligent listener can identify himself, and in presenting them ZB programme organisers have combined imagination with an understanding of one of the true functions of radio.

—Sycorax

The Fourth Gospel

THE Great Books series has been rather uneven for a BBC presentation. Lord Samuel in his talk on Lord Bacon did little more than dully rehearse the old catch-phrases about the

"mistiness" and inadequacies of the medieval mind, and the tremendous discovery of "reality" by Bacon. His attempt to establish a dichotomy between medieval thought and Renaissance thought, when modern scholars have done so much to remove the division, suggested a mind wedded to the popular simplifications of the last century. As a contrast, Professor C. H. Dodd on the Fourth



Gospel gave us a model talk—a crisply-delivered historical introduction, a contrast between the tone of John's narrative and that of the other Gospels, with a mention of Greek influences, a literary analysis, with clear examples, and a summary of the religious message of the work. All this was done in 15 minutes, with no trace of scrambling, and left the impression of an alert scholar, master of his subject, interested in it, and cordially inviting others to share his interest.

I Know What I Like

AS I listened for the first time to the 1Y2 *I Know What I Like* session, I realised that it would be idle to apply any criterion of musical taste to such a programme. More important than the actual music played is the revelation both in his choices and in his script of the character of the person conducting the half-hour. The feature is arranged each week by a person from a different occupation, and the period I heard was a particularly nostalgic one from a chemist. None of his selections had any musical distinction, but in 30 minutes he symbolised his profession ("Water, Cool Clear Water"), his parents ("Mother Machree"), his marriage ("Pedro the Fisherman"), his children ("Bless This House"), the city of his birth ("Old Father Thames") and his philosophy of life ("The Holy City"). The homely humour and engaging ingenuousness and sincerity of the commentator made his session interesting, both in itself and as representing the outlook and tastes of an ordinary citizen. It could have provided a starting-point for an examination of the New Zealand cultural temper. It certainly threw a good deal of light on the, to me, hitherto baffling reasons why people ask for particular musical items in request sessions.

No Flash in the Pan

STATION 1YA's morning session *Feminine Viewpoint* has been going for long enough now for us to see it not as a mere flash in the pan, but as a well-varied and consistently interesting programme, superior in nearly every respect to the soap-operas and uncomprehendingly read "famous singer" scripts it has replaced. The new feature blends interviews and talks, recorded programmes and studio discussions, music and drama, into a presentation with a distinct quality of its own. I find it pleasing to hear a women's session which is not built on

(continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 5, 1949