

—was thrown away in a laborious 10 minutes of dialogue. O. Henry slugged you suddenly with a sand-bag; the dramatist walked towards you shouting, with a pea-shooter in his hand. The crowning insult was the presentation of the aggressively American characters by actors speaking Elsie Fogarty English, without a trace of the accents O. Henry carefully records, although small gobbets of his dialogue bobbed once or twice to the surface of the stew, with the "dear" cleverly changed to "honey." "The Last Leaf" is no masterpiece, but if it had to be dramatised, why could it not have been presented as O. Henry wrote it, without gratuitous additions, meaningless changes, and padding, and with some attempt at realism in the playing?

—J.C.R.

No Trumpet

I HEARD from 2YA recently a recital by Antony Larsen, a singer I had not heard since he was a student in Wellington. He has a light baritone voice which he used most effectively; his singing was sensitive and intelligent throughout a programme which in most respects was a model. His contemporary songs by Moeran, Agnew and Rubbra were very well-chosen; so were his Purcell numbers and the delightful "Sally Gardens," always one of my favourites. The opening words of his first number "Behold I tell you a mystery," however, hit the nail on the head. The mystery was why he should have chosen, to begin his programme, "The Trumpet Shall Sound" from *Messiah*, a declamatory aria for which he has neither the voice nor the style; an aria, moreover, which has a vital trumpet part without which it should not be performed. *Messiah* is so frequently given that he had not even the excuse that he was bringing out a neglected song. His accompanist, Doris Sheppherd, was excellent, not only in the songs, but in a set of variations from a sonata by Dale. I had not heard this before, and found the variations a trifle unexpected, but I feel they would improve on further hearing. Miss Sheppherd's playing was delightfully crisp.

—D.M.

Fun and Games

WE have been Twenty-One and Outing on and off for some years now from 2ZB, and now I find that "Clumps" has sprung up almost over-night in the 2YA children's session. As played under avuncular aegis the game contains as much scope for education as for entertainment, since the object, once guessed, provides the occasion for some brief explanatory remarks by Uncle Cedric. I now know, for example, that the Matterhorn is more accessible from the Swiss side than the Italian, and that the original of Barrie's Peter Pan was one of five. It's a pity that we cannot have more games over the air. The announcers do their best to make quiz sessions frolicsome, but are foiled by the competitors who, with both eyes on the jack-pot, are in serious and high-minded mood. When television comes (she'll be coming round the mountains when she comes, which is why, according to the experts, she isn't coming yet) we can

possibly look forward to refreshingly non-verbal dallies with Adverbs and dumb-show charades.

E. and O.E.

CHARLES COBURN'S injudicious Lamb's-taling of *The Comedy of Errors* (2YA, November 2) left listeners undecided as to whether their vicarious embarrassment was more for Shakespeare or for Mr. Coburn. Identical twins and mistaken identities were *vieux jeux* when Plautus put them on the boards, and it was, to say the least of it, a little exuberant of the young Shakespeare to double the ration and square the resulting complications. Then along comes Mr. Coburn, unchanged by the sound of him from the days when he acted bluff, boyish, simple-hearted and simple-headed middle-agers in those early Deanna Durbin films, and proceeds to relate the barren tale with every appearance of enjoyment. No complication is too contrived for Mr. Coburn's devoted unravelling, no situation so strained that he cannot wring a drop of unsophisticated enjoyment from it. "And then you see this Dromio (of Ephesus) meets Antipholus (of Syracuse) but of course he thinks it's his master Antipholus of Ephesus (Ha-ha-HA!) and Antipholus (of Syracuse) thinks Dromio (of Ephesus) is his own Dromio (of Syracuse), Ha-ha-ha-ha-HA!" Even more sprightliness is imparted to the narrative by the use of the modern idiom (Coburn's "girl-friend" for Shakespeare's "courtesan") which gives the recital a spurious modernity while detracting still further (if possible) from its verisimilitude.

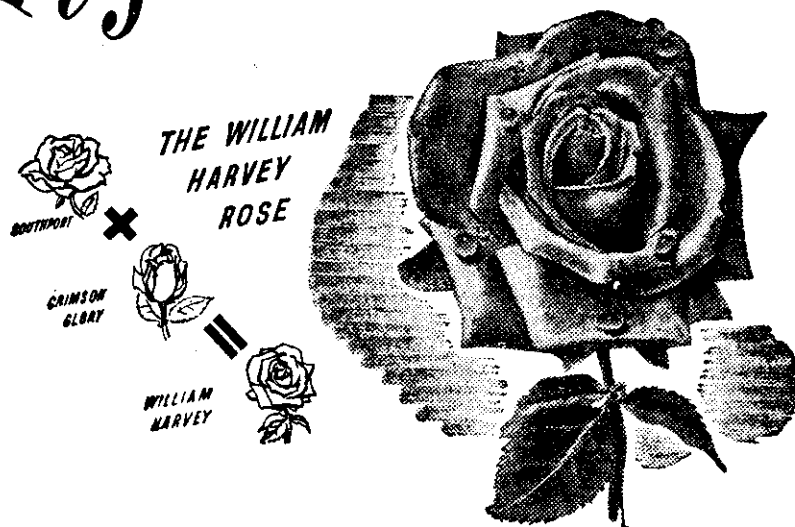
—M.B.

What've They Got . . . ?

THE English have a flair for documentary on the radio as on the film. The other Sunday, listening to the Buckinghamshire programme by Jack Hargreaves in the *Looking at Britain* series, I could only sit back and admire the easy skill with which we were conducted in imagination round an English shire. The technique has been worked out in a hundred such documentaries — dramatic pace and treatment, clash of voice, clash of opinion, flashbacks to the past and forward to the future, with the unobtrusive commentator holding it all together. There are no dark secrets about it: it is all there for anyone to hear. For example, I imagine that no one would fail to notice the effective way Hargreaves emphasised the changes 100 years have brought to Buckinghamshire, by his two voices breaking in on one another, the one anxious to show us the relics of past industry—the old lacemakers and chairmakers—the other, interrupting, impatient to vaunt the new light industries which show that Bucks is moving with the times. Our New Zealand documentaries are improving but we are still well back compared with these. The programme on Inchclutha, broadcast a few days ago from 4YA had moments when it seemed that the producers realised that a documentary was something more than bringing knowledgeable inhabitants to the mike and asking them questions—but only moments. Yet what have the BBC producers got that ours haven't got? More time, more money and more intelligence is probably the answer: you can't make good documentaries without using a lot of all three.

—K.I.S.

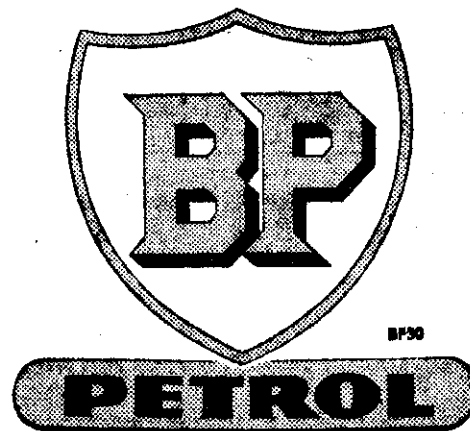
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