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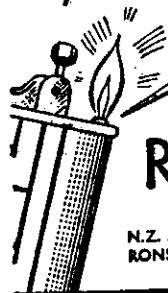
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RADIO REVIEW

Dehydrated Dickens

HAVING suffered rather severely during parts of the film version of *Great Expectations*, I sat down to the radio adaptation quite prepared to snarl furiously at any blatant tampering or off-key interpretation. But Mabel Constanduros and Howard Agg have turned in a workmanlike script and my feelings weren't too lacerated. All the same...

In this particular episode Herbert Pocket meets Pip for the first time and initiates him into the niceties of table manners. One criticism of the film had been that Pip was too gentlemanly right from the start. One could not quite believe that the Pip of Mr. John Mills was so much the blacksmith's apprentice that he could put his knife in his mouth, or that the "attitude of opening oysters on the part of the left elbow" came naturally to that member. Over the air, Pip's diffident marsh county accent was convincing and the idea of inept table manners not incongruous. After that we had a short interview with Mr. Jaggers, and then, rather suddenly, we were taken to Mr. Wemmick's Castle. The script fell down here because there was too much to take in, in too short a time. I doubt if anyone who had not read the book would get anything like a comprehensive picture of Mr. Wemmick's establishment, although the bit with Wemmick, Pip and the Aged P. all chuckling and nodding together like mad was in the right tradition. The episode ended with Joe's visit to Pip, now firmly set up as a young man of fashion. Laidman Brown was excellent as Joe (as was Bernard Miles in the film) but everything happened too quickly. There was no gradual transition or evolution of character, so that in the beginning we had Pip as a simple country boy, and not many minutes later we had him as a complicated town snob, with little or nothing in between to hint at the reason for his transformation.

In the adaptation of any major work, the main characters must carry the story and we have to expect some heads to fall. Minor characters which take their places naturally in the book can become irrelevancies over the air, but so much of the essential Dickens is in the minor characters and so often his main people are such sticks, such puppets, that, take out the Wopsles and the Pumblechooks, the Trabb's boys and the Avengers, and what is left? Quite often a fear-some melodrama and a mass of sentiment. An adaptation, even a good one like this, can only be a digest. There are some classic examples of the written word which defy translation into any other medium. True, this snippet of *Great Expectations* might send someone who

has not hitherto read it, to the bookcase; it might open up fresh fields of interest or enlightenment, but I doubt if the original purpose of any radio adaptation is ever quite so evangelical.

—Sycorax

Fresh and Stimulating

WELL established now as part of the 1YA morning programme is the not very accurately named "Breakfast Symphony." This provides an oasis of good, bright music in that desert of early morning offerings, where the bones of defunct musical comedies crumble into dust and the wild wolves howl as they rend the flesh from expiring crooners. Whoever selects these short pieces of classical music exercises careful discrimination. The mood is just right for that time of day—fresh, gay and stimulating. It is possible that, apart from gilding the day's beginning for those who like such music, the "Breakfast Symphony" may help to persuade others that "classical music" is not all lugubrious and solemn. There is a certain price to be paid for the privilege of hearing this session—truncated works, the announcement of the time through the music, and the incongruity of "My Honey Bee" after Mozart—but it is little enough when one can now begin the day with, say, two movements of Beethoven's Second Symphony. And, in some ways, I think the restricted time may have its advantages in keeping the compiler on his toes and sending him seeking for the right music down little-trodden ways.

Reductio ad Absurdum

THE American programme *Tell It Again*, heard from 12B on Sunday evenings, which purports to present dramatisations of "the world's best-loved stories," is clearly the radio equivalent of those appalling "Classic Comics." In half-an-hour's listening we get a teaspoonful of diluted Bovril in place of the bull. "Casey at the Bat" was not even Disney's version, but a soap-opera-like explanation by Casey of events leading up to his allowing himself to be struck out by his adopted son! "Typee" was an infuriating travesty of Herman Melville's graphic picture of Polynesian life, with a couple of minor incidents played up to give a misleading impression of the nature of the book and with the ending falsified. After hearing these, I shuddered as I tuned in to Edward Hale's "The Man Without a Country." Surprisingly this kept reasonably close

to the story and actually used some of Hale's own words. The reason, doubtless, is that this is a short story and so can be honestly treated in thirty minutes. But I note that this remarkable series also contains "Tom Sawyer" and "Les Miserables"! "Les Miserables" in half-an-hour! O God! O Montreal!

—J.C.R.

