



# UNDER THE RED LIGHT

## The Children's Hour From 3YA

*This is a story for young people that will be read by older people. It is in fact the older people who are missing most by not knowing what the younger people are doing; especially what they are doing at 3YA, Christchurch. Here is a glimpse:*

A THIN red second hand ticks away the forty-five minutes of the 3YA children's session. A tubular red light flashes on and off, and this means either—"Not a sound, we are beginning," or "That is over, for the moment we may whisper," and on the night of the King of the Castle spelling bee competition, before the red light was switched on, there were four children merrily talking to each other as they tried to remember all the words in the world that they might be given to spell for this final round of the competition. They came with school bags and overcoats and sat down on four of the tubular steel chairs that are covered with attractive green and white canvas. These are used by boys and girls who come to sing in the studio. While they are waiting for their turn the gay little canvas chairs must be very welcome.

### Work For a Play

There was to be a play, "Outposts of Empire," already described in *The Listener*. When you see a play on the stage or in the films there are painted wings and back-grounds which show you exactly where the players are, in a town, or a room, in New Zealand or in Africa. The actors in "Outposts of Empire" had nothing but their voices, the feeling they put into their speeches, a few sound effects and a little music, to take every listener to India. This is very difficult, as difficult as for a traveller trying to make his adventure live once more, in colour and in action, when he is quietly sitting at home again. But the traveller has gestures to rely on even if he has no background of painted villages and harbours. The broadcasters of this play threw so much energy and

enthusiasm into their parts that nearly every child who sat by the radio on that night must have seen the gay scarlet and white of the drummer boy's uniform and the great columns of the temple and the dark gleam of the Indians'

faces and arms. Every story and every play that is broadcast has to aim at creating an atmosphere of scenery with voice. It is not easy, and among the many who attempt it the producers of "Outposts of Empire" proved how hard they have to work.

### From Kaitaia To Invercargill

All those who arrange with patience and with sympathy the hourly children's sessions also have to work very hard. From Kaitaia to Invercargill there are boys and girls who send letters to 3YA, letters with news, with photographs, and with suggestions. These are all sorted out. The pictures of merry Tiny Tots and Kiwis fill the albums of the Major (the Major is the organiser of the Children's Hour at 3YA). There are pictures of children with their pet lambs or cats, children living in suburban houses, even children living in a lighthouse. Whenever possible the suggestions for songs, plays, verses, and competitions are used. From the Comrades' Club there is an idea for children to arrange a complete session themselves. When this happens it may be that some announcer, some organiser, some musician of the future, will discover the work he wishes to do. From the Children's Hour there are opportunities which everyone will be glad to use, and this is especially true in 1940, because there is a war, and the war means that paper is becoming scarcer and scarcer. Now the paper shortage leads to something else—

### The Orange Chart

In the Major's study there is a chart pinned to the wall. It has orange blocks which show which are the favourite items of the hour. The longest block is beside Stories. On certain nights the Book Lady, Margaret of Coppernob, gives a talk about books. Margaret has recently reviewed one called "Windy Island," by Theodore Acland Harper. She sounded so excited about it herself that she must

have made hundreds of children want to read it, and not only to read it but to hear it read over the air. Some ask for "The Wind in the Willows," some for "Winnie the Pooh," and many others; but none of these can be broadcast since each one has a copyright forbidding it. If everyone wants stories and if the written ones cannot be heard then there is a chance for those who have stories in their heads to write them and send them

you will help to create a national collection of stories. A little Maori boy may become as dear to us as little Toomai; a pukeko as Ferdinand the bull; the Rakaia river as the Mole's river bank.

### Ideas For New Performers

With the help of his clubs and his grown up broadcasters, the Major is always having some new idea, for a musical competition, for songs, for serials, and every day there is preparing to be done. Someone brings a joke to the studio; someone else brings a riddle or news of interest; someone else says he can play a piccolo. He is given an audition and later on the piccolo is heard playing tunes everyone likes. Just recently the Major discovered two girls who are twins. They are fair-haired and very enthusiastic. They sing and take parts in plays. Now, last year there was a play-writing competition for listeners. This year there may be another. Because so many young men are in camp or overseas at present it is quite difficult to arrange plays with a lot of parts for men. If you have the competition it would be a good thing to remember this and to try to write some of your plays entirely for girls. Don't forget that there are two young twins for whom you might write short scenes of dialogue and of singing. The Boy Rovers have written one play. They have nearly finished another. They have lots of ideas, especially for historical pieces. "We feel it is our work," one of them said, and there must be other children, from Invercargill to Auckland, who are as enthusiastic as the two Christchurch boys. Your ideas will be different from theirs, but that is variety, one of the most important things about the stage, the cinema, and the wireless. A blue dress is more interesting if you wore a yellow one yesterday. A play about India on Monday. A play about Old Mother Hubbard on Wednesday. That is one of the reasons why the Major is always busy, thinking of fresh things.

### Like a Children's Page

The Children's Hour is like a Children's Page in a newspaper, only it is heard, not read. It has the co-operation of boys and girls; of fathers and mothers; of grandmothers and grandfathers; of musicians and actors, and of all those who are known by such names as Rainbow Man, Booklady, Niccolo, and Riddleman. Of this co-operation there can never be too much. Players on a stage have always been greatly helped by their audiences. Broadcasters have no audience which can clap and shout "Encore!" But the clapping is written down in the letters which are always arriving for the Major at 3YA from his enthusiastic Tiny Tots, Kiwis, and Comrades.

## IDENTITY CONFUSED!

*An important official, having spent some years in Cairo, was leaving for England. On the last day his little son asked to be taken to see "Gordon" once again (in Cairo, there is a more-than-life-size statue of General Gordon riding a camel).*

*The small boy stood before the monument, and said with visible emotion: "Good-bye, Gordon, good-bye." His father was very gratified and touched by this evidence of patriotism, until, as they walked away, the child suddenly asked, "Daddy, who is that man sitting on top of Gordon?"*

to the Major, who has himself written two hundred and fifty. There will be no money because all work is voluntary, but if some boy has a story which he feels is good it is better that it should be told in a Children's Hour than that it should fade from his mind or lie scribbled on foolscap in some drawer.

### National Stories

We all like tales of other countries: of the little Indian boy, Toomai; of the little Spanish bull, Ferdinand; but our own country is full of just as exciting things: sheep runs, dairy farms, coal mines; musterers, tramps, goldminers, timber millers; whitebait, pukekos, tuis; bush, lakes, snow mountains. There can never be too many stories about these things; about our earth; about our people. There are only a few newspapers in the two islands which publish child literature. Soon there may be no paper. Remember this and remember the Major's difficulties with copyrights, and remember that a voice under the red light of the 3YA studio can tell your story to families all over New Zealand, and so by writing them, if they are good,