

THINGS TO COME

A Run Through The Programmes

LISTENERS to 1YA spent some weeks last year rambling round the foothills of Parnassus. Now, in company with Professor W. A. Sewell, they are invited to climb to the top of the mountain. Professor Sewell is giving a series of talks on Friday evenings entitled "Shakespeare and After." The first two talks will be on Shakespeare (January 22) and Shakespeare and Webster (January 29). In succeeding weeks he will discuss the Elizabethan and Caroline love lyrics, the religious lyrics of the 17th Century, the romantic lyrics of Shelley and Keats, and the Victorian lyrics of Arnold and Tennyson. Those who have allowed the dust to collect on their school classics should enjoy this excursion.

In Time of Drought

We are not bold enough to try to say something new about Burns. It is sufficient to repeat something true, namely, that he did more than any other of his countrymen — sage, sinner, or saint—to make it certain that there would always be a Scotland. Nor is it true that you have to be drunk to know why. If you need spirits to wash Lowland Scots down you will certainly find it dangerous to celebrate the poet's birthday on January 25 by reading every poem that your great-grandchildren will still be reading in the year 2000; but Burns and the barley bree together are extravagance. Tune in to 2YA at 9.25 that night and Nettie Mackay will convince you that the "immortal memory" will survive the present drought.

Divers' Methods

Years ago, when we were learning to swim, we used to write our Weekly Letter home on Sundays in the school library and the first sentence after "How are you, I hope you are very well," was "I can nearly swim" for about twelve weeks in succession. But at last we could write with truth "I can swim. We went out to a boat and I am learning to dive." Our diving caused laughter because we thought the quickest way in was the nose-holding method, and find now to our surprise that this is apparently looked on with favour by the *Health in the Home* people, who will present a talk from 2YA next Wednesday on "Feet First." We should perhaps mention that when we first saw this title we thought for one horrified moment that it was going to be a talk by an undertaker.

"I See a Voice"

All who suffer from the noisy activities of semi-detached neighbours must think with sympathy of the sufferings of thousands who, since the days of ancient Babylon, or perhaps before, have lived with only a wall to separate their mutual rancour. True, in the days of Pyramus and Thisbe, the wall was thick enough to need a chink through which Pyramus peeped in order to see a voice and hear his Thisbe's face. The "tedious brief scene" of Pyramus and Thisbe (probably not as presented by

Bottom and the Athenian workmen of Shakespeare's imagination, and here illustrated by our artist complete with chink and lion), will again find an air-



ing as a "Drama in Cameo" from 4YA on Wednesday, January 27, at 11 a.m., and we hope that it will be a lesson to obstructionist parents to let their children love their neighbours, even if they cannot do so themselves.

Unusual and Varied

Those listeners who appreciate unusual and varied song recitals should watch for and listen to those which

Dorothy Helmrich, the visiting Australian mezzo-soprano, will give in Christchurch, Dunedin, and Auckland this week, and in the next three weeks. From 2YA Miss Helmrich has already given recitals of Schumann, Schubert, Strauss and Russian composers, and in coming weeks she will sing de Falla's Spanish Street Songs; Brahms' songs, including some of his gipsy songs; French songs by Faure, Du Pare, Debussy and Ravel; English moderns (Warlock, Bliss and Delius), as well as some by the Finn, Sibelius. Included in her programme is also Schumann's "Women's Love and Life Cycle."

Kreisler Recovers

For the first time since a motor accident left him with a fractured skull early in 1941, Fritz Kreisler, now 67, played again in Carnegie Hall, Manhattan, last November. He had been seriously ill for a long time and New York's concert audiences had wondered for a while whether they would hear his violin again. But *Time* was able to record: "With his accustomed dogged melancholy he plunged into his first number; critics, aware of his long illness, held tight, but presently relaxed. At concert's end, Carnegie Hall shouted itself hoarse." Two well-known compositions by Fritz Kreisler, *Caprice Viennois* and *Tambourin Chinois*, will be heard from 1YA on Thursday, January 28, opening the evening programme at 7.30 p.m. They will be played by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

RECENT MUSIC

(No. 40: By Marsyas)

STATION 2YA's broadcast of records from the 20th century volume of the *Columbia History of Music* may have been an acknowledgment of my suggestion that this source should be further tapped—or perhaps it is my fault that I have never seen any of them in the programmes before.

It is noteworthy, however, that though the programme was called "Modern Music," it was confined to Debussy, Ravel, Elgar and Mahler, and as I have said before, it is some years now since *Punch* sighed for "the good old tunes of Strauss and Debussy." Varèse, Haba, and Casella still await the familiarity of the New Zealand audience, I fancy, and their contributions to this notable collection of modern exemplars would excite a good deal of interest.

THE Debussy piece, taken from *Six Epigraphes Antiques*, but wrongly named in the programmes as the whole set, is an ear-tickling sample of that composer's piano style; the Ravel song, bearing substantially the same name as a Mozart opera (*The Enchanted Flute*), and belonging to a song-set named *Scheherazade*, is guaranteed to deceive any ear familiar with Tchaikovski into thinking at first that it is *Swan Lake*. It is a sensitive though somewhat Puccinist setting of a poem by Tristan Kling-sor. If Percy Scholes selected *Sospiri* as truly typical of Elgar, he may be suspected of malicious irony.

The programme closed with a Mahler song, a proof of the lush abundance of his melodic gifts. Since Mahler's songs may conceivably be worth more to us than his Ninth Symphony, it would be interesting to have a programme of them

equal in length to that monster work. Here's a case where our performers could be commissioned to a set purpose. I don't know of any other records of Mahler songs (except half a 10-inch side of an old Elisabeth Schumann disc), but there is at least one large collection of Mahler songs in New Zealand from which a branch of the Music Teachers' Association presented a whole programme.

It would be a help to the studio programmes in general if someone could be posted to attend all such concerts and scout out valuable or unusual programme material. Many things hitherto unheard might then find their way to the radio audience. Such a scout would be able to report not merely on the nature of the items and their performance, but also on the audience's reception of them, which would be a further guide.

THE reason why those other oddities of modern music with all their -isms and -alities should be put on the air is not similar to the reason why there should be more late Beethoven quartets and Haydn symphonies. The need for them arises out of the way in which other modern works, of the notorious kind, are currently misjudged. One's whole impressions of, say, Jacques Ibert, or Walter Piston, may be retrospectively readjusted on hearing a piece of Edgar Varèse's noise-music, Casella's "Tarentelle" or Alois Haba's two-violin piece in sixth-tones. At present, Modern Music tends to be represented on the air by the hollow shams, the notoriety, whose faults would be exposed by the broadcasting of the more ingenuous novelties from which the sensational qualities have been detached and copied by inferior composers of works which render "modernity" in the letter but not the spirit.