

WE WANTED MONEY

(Written for "The Listener" by C.M.B.)

THE Patriotic Fund has inspired more different ways of raising money than any other institution in New Zealand. House-to-house collections for jumble sales, raffles, and straight-out donations have all played their part, but my home town found that their best way of contributing to the fund was by putting on a Victory Revue. Everyone who wasn't in it came to see it. In fact, as a box-office success it had even *Gone With the Wind* beaten—in our district, at any rate.

I went backstage to see the producer after the last night, and found her kneeling in the prompt corner salvaging some safety-pins.

"Surely you didn't write all the scripts yourself?" I asked her when I had joined in the search.

"Heavens, no! I've cows to milk and a family to cook for. No, I simply got together people I hoped would be interested, divided them into groups and gave each group an idea to work on. For instance, you remember the sketch about the new arrival to the district? Well, I suggested the theme as being suitable for local allusions, and left it to that particular group. Local hits and skits always go down best with a country audience, where everybody knows everybody else's business as well as her own. Of course a lot of the jokes were hoary, but that didn't matter. I think people like old jokes—they know it's safe to laugh."

This War And Last

That, I thought, is certainly one point of view. I mentally reviewed the show—sketches, ballets, the Britannia tableau, and songs with a chorus gallantly doing its best to move on the Town Hall stage.

"I suppose it was very different from the concerts of last war?"

"Yes and no. We sang 'Tipperary' and 'Mademoiselle from Armentieres' then, and now we sing things like 'Maori Battalion' and 'Sergeant Sally.' But I can remember singing 'Land of Hope and Glory' from this same stage in the last war, and thinking of my husband overseas. Last night when we sang it I thought of my son. But most of the local hits are the same, only brought up to date. There's one change—the taste for dramatic recitations seems to have gone. At a concert in 1915 I heard a most moving monologue on the death of a young hero. The artist was the star pupil of the local elocution teacher, and she clasped her hands to her bosom and declaimed in thrilling tones,

*'Half of him mud, half of him blood,
And half of him nothing at all.'*

"We were no better at arithmetic then than we are to-day."

"But didn't you have difficulty in getting the cast together for rehearsals?"

There Were Problems

The producer laughed. "In that way it did seem like the concerts of the last war. We're mostly country folk, you see, and, of course, petrol isn't available for things like rehearsals, but it was amazing how we managed. Quite a number of us had an old trap or buggy in the shed, and we got to rehearsals like that. People were keen enough to get over the difficulties. Of course there were problems."

Here the producer lowered her voice dramatically (funny how drama grows on you). "Next to no men left now, and women by themselves can be fiends. And you've no idea of the amount of tact needed to convince Mrs. B. that she wasn't quite the right build for the front line of the chorus. And our pianist—if you had seen that grim figure resolutely battling through 'Rustle of Spring'!

"And of course," she went on, "there were people who were indignant because they were put into

skits, and people who were indignant because they weren't.

"Still, it was worth while. It was money we wanted, and we made well over £200 in the two nights. A visitor from the South Island said we were an example to other dramatically-minded districts, and" (she laughed), "I've discovered that acting is the very best cure for one's complexes, yes, and frustrations and inhibitions, too."

Eavesdropping

Superior Lunch-house

"WELL, my dear! It's simply ages since I've seen you. Wasn't the last time just after you'd come back from an island cruise?"

"Why yes! And that's nearly two years ago. High time I went for another!"

"But there's a war on."

"Oh. Of course."

"THIS is the nicest coffee I've ever tasted."

"Yes, it is quite nice isn't it? I always say there's coffee and coffee."

"And tea and tea."

"Yes, of course!"

"THERE'S rather a nice tea-room in X Street."

"Oh, yes! M's. Yes, very nice. They've got such nice furniture."

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