

Listening While I Work (7)

By "Materfamilias"

"DO the American programmes that we hear on the air really represent America, the America with whom we are building a solid and, we hope, lasting friendship?" I asked a week or two ago. Unexpectedly I had an indirect answer by way of a letter from England the other day. It may not be the right answer; at the best, it is only partial. "I have been surprised to find," my correspondent wrote, "how many of the Americans I meet here approve of our BBC programmes. They welcome especially the freedom from advertising—interruptions which they confess ruin their best musical programmes—and they maintain that it is easier for a body like the BBC to keep up a high standard just because there is no competition which would force it to cater so much more for popular tastes rather than discriminating ones."

A FRIEND of mine once described history novels as "history with permanent waves." If that is so, some broadcasting studios could easily qualify as Beauty Parlours. When fiction fails, script writers and producers turn to history. At present, female historical figures are in the ascendant, at any rate from the ZB's. In the Friday night *Women of Courage* series we have dramatised episodes from the lives of such varied women as Madame Curie, Isadora Duncan, Queen Christina, Florence Nightingale, Harriet Beecher Stowe—to mention just a few. The word "Courage" is interpreted in the widest possible sense and so are the lives, or rather the episodes. In the mornings we have been hearing from 2ZB *Cavalcade of Drama*,

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offered after weaning time startle his palate till he gets used to them. So the rule is to introduce each new food gradually by small quantities—say quarter-teaspoons—until baby gets used to the fresh taste. As he gets used to it, he will get to like it.

During his second year, baby should get accustomed to the taste of most foodstuffs. Take vegetables! If you limit the range to a few only, those are the only ones baby will like. So grow all you possibly can in your garden, and starting gradually with each new one, let him get used to all vegetables. Thus you'll introduce a wide range of protective foodstuffs beside his milk—all vegetables and fruits as they come forward by seasons.

He will develop the liking unless others interfere. If older brothers and sisters have been similarly brought up, there will be no trouble from them, for they will like everything. By imitation, baby will accelerate his liking for different foods. If they pick at food, baby will do likewise. If mother and father say they don't like a food, and the child hears, or senses it from their attitude, he will also dislike that food. So—new foods, and many different ones, by small doses—no dislikes demonstrated by grown-ups—and baby will like all put before him.

(To be continued)

featuring the life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. This is a modern re-"perm." of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* with a whole lot of Elizabeth's post-elopement life tacked on. Like the play it has a dramatic appeal, but the sentiment, and especially the technique of using ghost voices to remind Elizabeth of her unhappy youth is overdone. And I find Elizabeth with a broad American accent rather disconcerting.

JOSEPHINE, EMPRESS OF FRANCE is also on the air from ZB stations. This production differs from the others in that it is New Zealand-written and New Zealand-produced. The script is by an Aucklander, Frank Kenyon. Whether the picture given of the capricious, flirtatious wife of Napoleon is absolutely authentic I would not venture to say, but at least it is not blatantly inaccurate. My chief criticism is the old one that as soon as a play is set anywhere than in England the producer seems to think it necessary to introduce a host of foreign accents. Josephine speaks with a pronounced French accent; Napoleon (who incidentally gives a very creditable performance) is only slightly Gaelic in speech; and the accents of the other characters come in between. But after all, they are all supposed to be speaking correct French (or did Napoleon have a Corsican twang?) so why not translate it into plain English?

SPEAKING of accents, I appreciated the plain North Country of the BBC speaker in the series *How It Began* (2YA, Mondays, 7.15 p.m.) Some years ago there were many complaints that an Oxford bleat was all that came over the English airwaves. That is in no sense true any longer—if, indeed, it ever was.

When you do occasionally hear the "bleat" (I point a finger for instance at Capt. Quentin Hogg of the *Brains Trust*) it sounds as much like an accent as any other. This particular speaker—his subject was stainless steel—sounded as though he not only knew what he was talking about but also as though he had made steel and had worked with those who made it all his life.

DILUTION is perhaps what I dislike most about serials. If a book is worth reading it is worth taking some time over. If it is exciting, then let's get on with it. But the serial keeps us in suspense—and the suspense is too long for my liking. Just think what a plight we would be in if we took, say, *Talking Drums* from 2ZB seriously. We were left on Saturday with a fierce African elephant charging straight at the hero and his party. That elephant will go right on charging over those 50 feet of African jungle from last Saturday until the following Friday! Of course any habitual serial listener will know that Something Will Happen to prevent the Elephant getting there. It always does, otherwise the serial would end too soon. I suppose the essence of serial writing is to stretch the thinnest of tales over the greatest possible distance. But how much better, in my opinion, is the closely-woven story! For the fact is that serial writing is a device, not a true literary form. Some of Dickens's best novels appeared first as serials, but they also stood the test of being put together. Would this apply to radio serials? No, nor to film serials either. Instead of so many radio serials I would prefer more full-size plays or entertainments. For I find my fare at present too scrappy—20 minutes of this, 15 of that. If I am listening for the evening, I like listening for the evening.

I WISH I COULD MEET EVERY WOMAN FACE TO FACE! I'D SAY "IF YOU WANT TO SAVE CLOTHES AND COUPONS USE RINSO EVERY WASHDAY!"



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