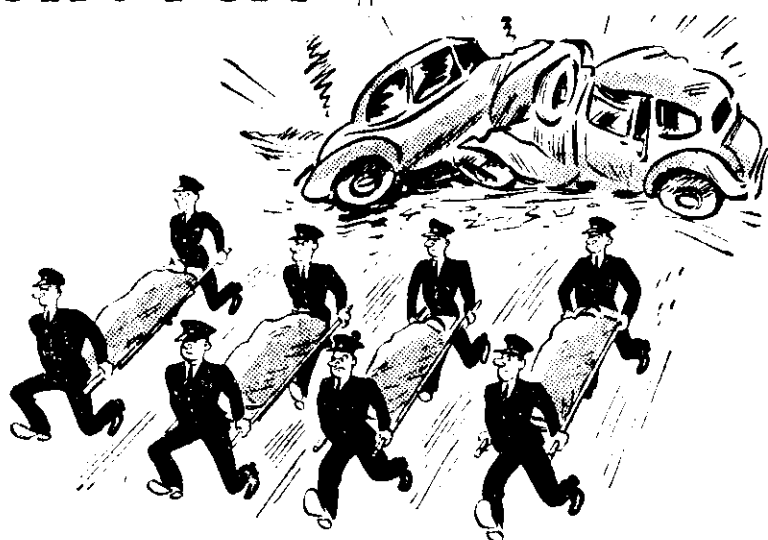


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Radio Review

LIVELY AND PROVOCATIVE

QUESTION MARK, the YA national discussion session, is one of the best of recent innovations. I haven't heard a dull panel yet. If there is one feature that deserves a weekly repeat it is surely this. The recent discussion *Has New Zealand Come Up to Expectations?* by three new settlers, a Dutchman, an Englishman and an Estonian woman, under the chairmanship of Richard Beauchamp, was very lively and decidedly provocative. The panel was uninhibitedly frank and critical—of our school system (mildly), of our pioneering myths (sharply), of our commercial radio (devastatingly)—and there was a division of opinion as to whether New Zealanders work harder from Monday to Friday, in their employers' time, or on Saturday and Sunday, in their own. There was a pleasant tone about the whole session, with enough praise mingled with the blame to remove any charge of unreasonableness. The chairman was inevitably moved to act as the defender of local mores. This he did ably enough; but I did feel that his often-repeated "Give us time" wasn't precisely a devastating counter-argument.

Nostalgia Persists

It may be just another instance of the common habit of regarding something in the past as necessarily better than its equivalent now; but almost every time I hear a new NZBS play, I feel that the standard, while still high, has declined during the past three years or so. One recent re-playing convinces me that this is no nostalgic gilding. I thought *Jeannie* (1YA) was a new production. It was no great shakes as a play—a *Clementina-Wing-y* story, with a Scottish lassie, relieved by death of a tyrannical father, seeking "life" and finding, first, disillusionment in Vienna and, later, cosy domesticity. Yet it was played with dash and evident enjoyment by all concerned, so that the fragile little piece was made delightfully human and touching. The chief joy was the vital personality of Jeannie, with her warm, homely Scottish accent. This, I thought, is something like a radio play—well produced and uniformly well acted. At the end, however, it was revealed that Jeannie had been played by Olive Lucius, who toured New Zealand in *Brigadoon* in 1952. So the nostalgia, I'm afraid, persists.

—J.C.R.

On Board the Fram

AT first, listening to *The Slowest Journey in the World* (the story of Nansen and his ship Fram) I thought the programme might be something of an endurance test. It seemed to make rather mechanical use of the two-voice technique, with one narrator arbitrarily replacing another, which makes you feel the subject-matter is bound to be dull if the producer is going to such pains to brighten up the presentation. However, once all were aboard the Fram

the programme warmed up surprisingly, thanks mostly to the personality of Nansen, who was revealed as a man of warmth as well as greatness. Even the diary entries, which occasionally could have sounded stilted, emerged as the natural expression of a very human person. I was so caught up in the programme that at the climax, when the explorer Jackson looms out of nothingness to rescue Nansen and Johansen after their gruelling return from the 86th Parallel, I felt as though a friend had been rescued rather than merely one of history's great men.

Where Was Villon?

LISTENING to James Forsyth's play *The Other Heart*, based on the life of Francois Villon, was an experience, but an experience one would not wish to repeat. The play is one of considerable dramatic power, in this case sadly blunted by over-production. It was full of noises on, the pealing of bells, the braying of trumpets, the creaking of gibbets, the twittering of little birds. The hysterical laughter of Rene's doxy caused exquisite agony early in the piece, but it was nothing to the braying of Villon's sadistic jailer a good hour later. Between noises it was possible to be stirred by the quiet terror of the passage where Katrine de Vaucelles relates her dream of the Examiner, to be moved by the dramatic rightness of the final scene. But I found it impossible to reconcile my ideas of Villon with either the puling poet of the early part or the sadly-wise fugitive of the latter part, though there were strong echoes of Christopher Fry. Where was Francois Villon? Where are the snows of yesteryear?

—M.B.

Broken Rehearsals

IN her lecture to London University students on the filming of *Julius Caesar*, in which she took the part of Caesar's wife Calpurnia, Greer Garson touched on a point that has often disturbed me, namely, that in the usual Hollywood method of production there is no continuity of rehearsal. An actor may speak a few words before coming into a room and complete his sentence six months later when all the shots of the interior of the room are taken. In *Julius Caesar* the rehearsals were continuous. The actors had a chance to "live" into their parts, to feel the developing psychology of the play and hence to impose on it the unity and individuality we might expect from this approach. Whether the film has proved this point sufficiently to influence Hollywood's methods is more than one can tell. On the face of it, it is not the sort of teaching which should need driving home to people engaged in any kind of dramatic work, and as Greer Garson herself said in her 3ZB talk the actors in other pictures do find the going extremely difficult for this very reason.

Up and Down the Stream

"CAN a horse laugh?" I begin to think not, having listened to the 3YA series *Midstream Horses*, whose patient nags never questioned the reminiscences of their riders. Far be it from me to disparage country ways, the calm, the homely wisdom which Mr. Oliver Duff sheds over his "retirement" to a small farm after an important and vigorous

N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 21, 1954.