

High Jinks on the China Station

[I]T seems, looking back, that the nineteen-twenties certainly had something. Otherwise why Dior and his "flapper" styles? or the success in Britain and America of *The Boy Friend*? Now you can listen to that farce of the 'twenties, *The Middle Watch*, which the ZB stations are going to broadcast at 9.35 p.m. on Sunday, April 3, in an NZBS production. Exactly! No Ibsen-overtones, no social comment; it's silly, preposterous—but funny!

The Middle Watch, inspired by the traditional sailors' toast "Sweethearts and Wives—may they never meet" was first



produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, in 1929 with Aubrey Mather as Marine Ogg and Reginald Gardiner as Commander Baddeley. The small part of Nancy Hewitt was played by an "unknown" called Ann Todd. It was later filmed and starred Jack Buchanan as Captain Maitland.

Ian Hay, an Army man (above) wrote *The Middle Watch* in collaboration with Commander Stephen King-Hall. So the play is nautically correct even though the goings-on aboard H.M.S. Falcon are far from being so. The Falcon is lying in a Chinese river estuary, and the ship's officers are entertaining guests from the near-by shore station. Inadvertently two of the most attractive of the guests are stranded on board. They could have gone ashore at the last moment but their officer friends decide to dispense with the offer. Stalwart Marine Ogg (Bernard Beeby), on reluctant sentry-go, is thoroughly confused by the frenzied alarms and excursions in the captain's cabins (connected by a bathroom). However, Admiral Sir Hercules Hewitt is finally placated, Fay Eaton (Alys Gordon-White) and her Captain Randall (Roy Leywood), Mary Carlton (Melanie Paul) and her Captain Maitland (Selwyn Toogood) are happily betrothed and Commander Baddeley (William Austin) smooths things over with his fiancée, the Admiral's daughter. The production is by Bernard Beeby.

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