

to be despised. The people who appear on these programmes would not all have the knowhow to write and deliver a script, but talking informally for a few minutes they often do very well. And if they don't—well, that item will soon be over.

Neither For Nor Agoonst

CONFESSION is good for the soul. I've delayed making this one until I should either change my opinion or work up the courage to express it. The first has not happened, the second has, so here goes. "You either love the Goons or you loathe them," all the propagoonda says; "you can't be indifferent to them." That's just the trouble. I am indifferent to them. I admire the ingenuity which must give them the highest decibel-rating in radio history. I enjoy the mad inconsequence of some of their sequences, I'm decidedly cool about the voices. There I would be content to leave them, neither for nor against, if it weren't for the ballyhoo. "The radio age has come into its own with the Goons." That's about as sensible as saying the age of printing has come into its own with the comic strip. There are considerable resemblances. I don't exclude the possibility of later conversion—I remember a time when I thought *TIFH* wasn't a patch on *Itma*. And since I like *A Life of Bliss*

rather better than the Goons, readers will know what reliance to place on such a bourgeois taste. —R.D.McE.

'Twas a Famous Victory

ALTHOUGH toiling in my garden, dismayed by its rankness and evident preferences for all the stolid and more luxuriant weeds, I did not miss a word of the fourth Test. Sets blared all round me, and Winston McCarthy was as clear and impassioned at the compost heap as he was at the seed bed, whose winter ravages I endeavoured to repair. Next door, the neighbours sat in silent absorption, only occasionally picking up a clod of packed earth and crumbling it nervously in their tense hands. For vast issues were at stake; national honour, and a record of Springbok victories in test rubbers unbroken since 1896. I need hardly tell you that record was shattered. Winston McCarthy addressed, I suspect, the whole nation, in a respectful silence which politicians and religious leaders can call on only in times of acute crisis. I have written before of that keen-eyed eloquent man. Let me do so again, in a tribute to his massive skill which has unfalteringly made vivid for us more than a score of games; of his evident concern for the game itself, for his splendid and exceptional impartiality. He has,

in every game, nobly upheld its best ideals. The massed demonstration at the end of the fourth Test was most moving; sentimental fool that I am, fully aware of the seductions and dangers of mass emotion, I became part of it, and almost sang *Now is the Hour* myself in my quavering baritone. Farewell, then, Springboks! Till 1960!

A Serious Play

OSCAR WILDE describes *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a trivial comedy for serious people. The announcer who introduced the John Gielgud production in ZB Sunday Showcase last week, evidently accepted this sly sub-title at its face value. "This is a piece of the gayest nonsense," he said in effect, "Turn your mind off; enjoy it." Simple man! Or rather, simple script-writer! Far from being trivial, *The Importance* merely wears a trivial mask. For what makes this comedy supreme masterpiece in English literature is precisely that it is not trivial at all, but deadly serious. In a few lines, Wilde can lay bare issues which took Shaw whole plays to adumbrate; marriage, high society, the class struggle; it is all there, delicate and deadly. How better could

Wilde have told us that romantic love exists only on paper, than by the scene where Cecily shows Algernon her diary? It took Shaw all of *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, and much of *Man and Superman* to deal with it. *The Importance* is Wilde's undoubted masterpiece, and still a glory of the theatre. I never tire of it. What I am beginning to tire of, though, is the stranglehold placed on it these twenty years by the Gielgud-Evans combine. Their version lacks pace, and is at once over-stylised and over ordinary. Edith Evans's frosty, rumbling grotesque, once hilarious, no longer delights me; Roland Culver's Algernon was too heavy and prosaic, and Pamela Brown's Gwendolen was incipient Evans, with rumbles afar off. I missed the ro-tund clericalism of this Dr. Chasuble, and Miss Prism went for a Burton in the hands of Jean Cadell. There remains Sir John Gielgud's Ernest, still triumphant, and surprisingly, Celia Johnson's Cecily, which was arch, clear, acid and crystalline. Decidedly, we need a new *Importance*. This one is dated.



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