

MINSTREL REVIVAL

THE craze for minstrel shows which swept America in the 19th century, saw its heyday between 1850 and 1870, and the end of this peculiar American phenomenon (which was extremely popular in England also) came during the second decade of the 20th century. The conventional shows started with the cry, "Gentlemen, be seated," and this cry has been used as the title of a record which will be heard from YAs this week in *Theatre of Music. Gentlemen, Be Seated*, is described as "an artful and elegant reconstruction of the most celebrated minstrel shows." Most of the songs are familiar, and if the gags do not measure up to present-day humour, the music is certainly as "artful and elegant" as could be wished.

The minstrel show consisted of three parts. At the rise of the curtain the black-faced middleman stood in a semi-circle. Then the middleman, "Mister Interlocutor," ordered "Gentlemen, Be Seated." The interlocutor, painfully correct, engaged in badinage with Mr. Bones and Mr. Sambo, the two endmen, who were the chief punsters and wise-crackers. Quips and conundrums, interpolated comic and sentimental songs, with a gay songs by chorus, filled out the first part. The second part was the "olio," a variety bill of dances, vocal and instrumental music, and the third part consisted of after pieces—farces, comic opera or burlesque.

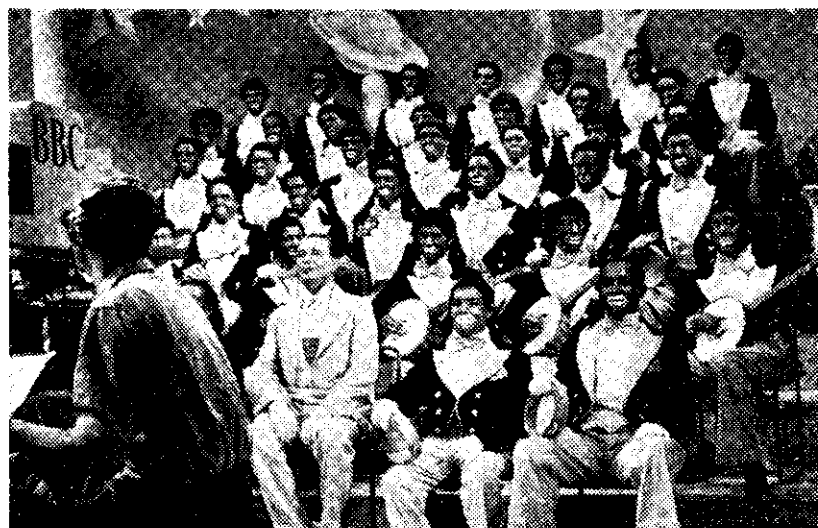
Gentlemen, Be Seated, opens with a grand march, including "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" and "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee." Other songs included in the programme are "Camptown Races," "Old Folks at Home," "In the Evening by the Moonlight" and "Shine On Harvest Moon." In this last is included a perfectly executed soft shoe sequence by "Mr. Bones." Singers include Gordon Goodman, John Neher, Stanley Kimes and Osie Johnson, and the orchestra and chorus are conducted by Allen Roth.

Black Chiffon

THE chaos which results when a smart, attractive woman of 44 has a mental aberration in a department store and steals a black chiffon nightdress, is told in a play, *Black Chiffon*, to be heard from YAs and 4YZ on Monday, October 15. The play, by Lesley Storm, has been adapted for broadcasting by Mollie Greenhalgh, and the players are Davina Whitehouse, Roy Leywood, Alan Jervis, Wendy Gibb, Dorothy Munro, Peter Varley and Jessie Weddell.

Alicia Christie has been the peacemaker in her family, particularly between her husband and her son, who had always been antagonistic towards each other, and the crisis occurs a few days before her son's wedding. She is in a department store, picks up a nightdress without paying for it, and is seen by a detective. Her husband is upset and unreasonable about the whole episode, and calls in a doctor, who diagnoses that the reason for Alicia's extraordinary action springs from jealousy of her son's fiancée.

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 12, 1956.



A MINSTREL show, as presented by BBC television

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