

The Boily Boy

IN a prologue to "A few words by Dylan Thomas," the latest exhibit in *ZB Sunday Showcase*, the announcer was pleased to observe that as a result of Dylan's value as "copy," the community is now poetry conscious. I cannot share this view. Dylan's rumbustious life and its faithful catalogue may have stirred some to wonder at the odd abodes the Muses sometimes choose, but how many people have been led direct from this to the Collected Poems? A few, perhaps, but far more, surely, to the salty parade of *Dylan Thomas in America*. However, let that pass. Dylan's few words, happily recorded for us in Boston in 1952, introduced his programme with a characteristic "explosive bloodburst of a boily boy" in that highly stylised manner it would be fun to try and parody, piling up a series of packed, alliterative images, and letting them collapse with a nicely-timed bathos at the end. He then read three of his own poems, and I wondered again at the curiously liturgical, almost modal, effect he contrives; his voice never rests, as it were, on the tonic, and no statement he makes seems final. But everything he did was rounded into a high rhetorical flourish worlds away, and thank God for it, from this age of averages, mediocrities, and common men.

—B.E.G.M.

Insubstantial Castle

CASTLE IN THE AIR, a farce by Alan Melville, proved pretty feather-weight stuff for *ZB Sunday Showcase* after the substantial plays and documentaries this excellent session has been offering. Why is it that English farces seem so much more old-fashioned and so much less witty than American ones? This play, about an impoverished Earl trying to sell his castle to an American millionairess, while preventing the Coal Board from requisitioning it, abounded in all the stock lines and situations which have done duty on the cocktail-set theatre for a couple of generations. It may have been lightly amusing on the stage. But the one and a half radio hours spread the joke far too thin, and the last half-hour was, for me, listening only in the line of *Radio Review* duty. The NZBS players went through their predictable paces. Dorothy Campbell was pleasing as the American widow—but I'm not sure how much the effect of her performance owed to the fact that she is a talented player, and how much to the fact that she was a fresh voice.

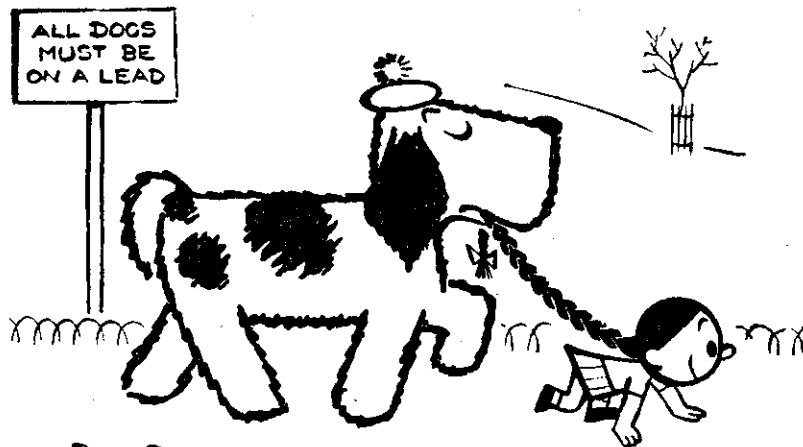
Enter Joyce Grenfell

I WAS glad to have the chance of hearing *Joyce Grenfell Requests the Pleasure of Your Company* on the Sunday National Programme, since I had

caught only a fragment during its earlier *ZB Sunday Showcase* airing. Miss Grenfell who on films plays toothy, gauche games-mistresses, affected modistes and prattling Englishwomen abroad, shows herself in this programme much more subdued and genteel, but still exceptionally entertaining. Save for one sketch, a piece of typical English class-humour about a shop-girl mad on dancing, she bypasses the comic "turn" or impersonation, for nostalgia and well-bred evocation. She deals in polite. *Punch*-like, fun—not at all like Anna Russell, as I'd expected, but more like

the late great Ruth Draper. Much of her material, especially a song about a woman and her three brothers, reminded me of the more serious songs in early Noel Coward revues. Without being at all hilarious, this session had a gentle, wry charm of its own, a distinctively British kind, suggesting private schools for girls, hols with Mater and Pater, tea on the lawn, tweedy walks and dogs. But it was infuriating to hear the announcer call her, more than once, "Joyce Grenfield."

—J.C.R.



ROY DAVIS

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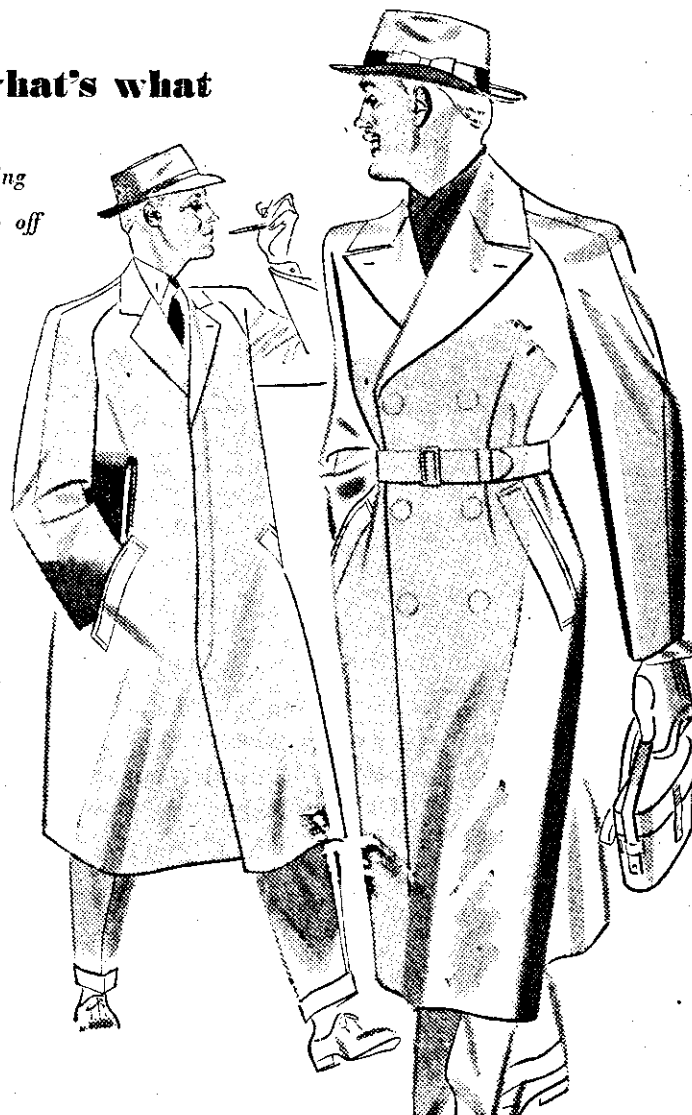
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