

them. Think of World War I: neither "Tipperary" nor "Pack Up Your Troubles" was strictly a war song, and Haig, Kitchener, Foch and Pershing remained uncelebrated. And of World War II, what survives? Only "Lili Marlene," a German ballad with a good tune, and no Churchill, Stalin, Montgomery, Eisenhower songs. The truth is surely, that modern wars are fought without the support of great popular conviction; they are accepted as the bestial necessities of our times, and this is no ground on which to nourish an eloquent, popular art. But back to *The Blue and the Gray*. It seemed at first somewhat strange that the BBC should pay a tribute to an American war, but the standard of the programme was so high, its shape so vividly compelling, that I doubt whether it could be better done in the States.

—B.E.G.M.

For Women, Warmth

THE BBC chooses commentators by voice first; it is easier to train in sport, say, someone who already speaks well than vice versa. I do not know the NZBS method, but the first seems sound enough, and since radio personalities take time to flower, the job often brings out latent abilities. Not all are blessed with the natural charm of Loma Jones, but one who has quite literally warmed to her work at 3YA is Airini Grennell. Aided perhaps by a spell in children's sessions, her beautiful voice has acquired human interest and understanding. Women's programmes give some solid material; cosmopolitan, too, this last week, and a delightful highlight was to hear Airini Grennell interviewing Miss Young Sook Park, of Korea. Both were interested; both enjoyed themselves. Since Miss Park's English was recently learned, though charming, she was unobtrusively shepherded by Miss Grennell. An interview like this will include the listener in a way a straight talk cannot do, and is particularly suitable for domestic discussion of food, clothes, and customs in other countries. Next day we went to Japan with a Swedish woman: what an armchair traveller Constant Listener is, if he but realises.

Brashness is All

YET the interview has limitations, and in the BBC series *We Write Novels* is seen at its worst. These in particular seem scrappy; no sooner has the author his teeth into something than he is led to the next question. For one whose attitude towards the novel remains serious the first programmes were disappointing: Kingsley Amis views the purpose of the novel as entertainment; Nigel Balchin would hate to be regarded as a literary gent. But V. S. Pritchett had interesting things to say, such as lack of caste and creed making a peculiar private world for each modern novelist, and C. P. Snow buried the novel of sensibility under the novelist-historian of a managerial society. The one thing that emerges is the extraordinary self-dubbing of the younger literati, which has reached its apotheosis in Colin Wilson's rating of himself as significantly contemporary in fame with Elvis Presley, while really, one feels, considering himself a second Shaw. That there is more in Kingsley Amis than he will allow is confirmed by critics; the pattern of the modern novel, and its authors, will in time emerge, but scarcely, one thinks, by the end of this series.

—R.F.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 5, 1957.

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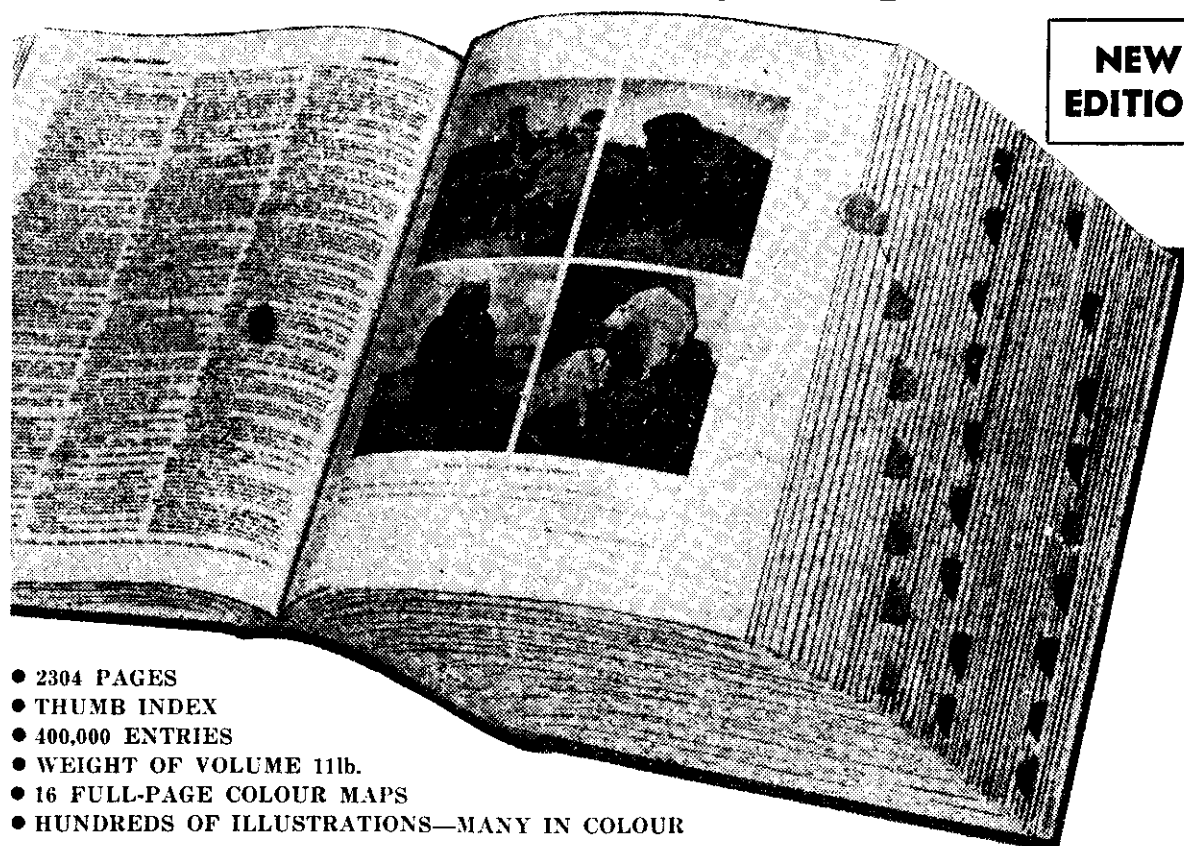
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