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Radio Review

CHAMPION

IN its day, *Love on the Dole* was a fine, brave play, and its day was 1935. I confess to entertaining some irritation at the prospect of a new NZBS production of a play, so firmly rooted in the past as to be irretrievable, and I began composing tart little sentences for this page, about a spirit of adventure only twenty years behind the times. But the play is still contemporary. It is so well constructed, its dialogue so neat and shapely, and its sense of human dignity so simple and profound, that its fine bravery survives undimmed. And it demonstrates so lucidly the truth of Shaw's celebrated

dictum on poverty being the worst of crimes, in which nearly all the others have their roots, that it produced on me, listening, a fierce indignation. This is as much a tribute to Bernard Beeby's production, in exemplary taste, except for the portentous opening music, redolent of opera at its most lurid, and the old hands at Productions proved quite at home in their Lancashire accents. The chorus of old harpies, battenning like flies on the poverty and sorrow around them, were champion, and Dorothy Campbell gave a performance as Sally of memorable distinction. I could have wished there were a play of equal warmth and skill written of our own sufferings in the early thirties, but I wonder if our actors would be as convincing in Kiwi as in Lancashire?

evening *Scottish Session* from 1YA. It would be so easy to fall into the National Club Evening tone and mood on such a programme, yet Mr Taylor's well-balanced choice of recordings, amiable, yet not over-sentimental commentary, and a certain pleasing diffidence keep his session this side of the nostalgic emigrant's myth. I am prepared to be convinced that Sassenachs might find the bagpipes disturbing on the radio (some benighted souls, I am told, find them disturbing anywhere!) and doubtless remembering such listeners, Mr Taylor does not over-work the chanters. But his blend of bagpipes, traditional songs, the Glasgow Orpheus Choir and the odd Harry Lauder number, and his little pieces of historical, geographical and biographical information add up to a pretty soothing programme all round. I wonder whether Mr Taylor might not sometimes give us some Scottish verse as well. It seems to me that it would suit both the character of his session and his own extremely pleasing voice as well. After all, those English poets have a pretty fair run on other programmes.

Out to the Count

GRAHAM SUTTON'S play *Defeat*, produced by the BBC, is an account of crime in another field, the more openly spectacular field of power politics, and the disasters which the gods prepare for those who are overweening. The play consists of flashbacks to a dialogue between Thucydides, returning to Athens after twenty years of exile, still gathering notes for his great history of the Peloponnesian War, and a survivor of the disastrous expedition which Athens made against Sicily in which the whole of the Athenian fleet was lost and thousands put to the sword. The chief character is Nicias, a man of great integrity but limited talents who, on the basis of continued military success in which, as he says himself, he could hardly have failed, is made unwilling commander of the expedition. It was well done, full of striking parallels with our own time, the official lies to justify the naked lust for power all being trotted out, as they still are.

—B.E.G.M.

Odd Operas

THE YC Sunday opera broadcasts have some strong competition from other stations. I often find myself torn between something especially appetising on *Sunday Showcase*, and an absorbing opera. Last week, the seduction of *The School for Scandal* led me to abandon Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*, in full flight, with very great reluctance. I hope that we shall have the chance to hear works like this again later on less heavily competitive evenings. However, the pleasure Glinka's brilliant, lively, tuneful music gave me leads me to reflect on the exceptional service these YC links provide. In other countries, America, for instance, it is only very rarely that one hears a complete opera on radio; and hardly ever that one encounters a work outside the conventional repertoire. To be sure, in these lands,

(continued on next page)

Scots Who Hae

FOR genuine and unaffected folksiness, I know no better current programme than Harry Taylor's Friday

The Week's Music... by SEBASTIAN

IN a civilised age of recording and good communications, the need for folk song is dying out, and with it the songs themselves. As a corollary, musicians all over the world have realised for half a century now that unless these songs were somehow captured and collected, they would vanish into a dim past, and we would lose the most natural music in existence. So the folk music societies were formed, and thousands of songs were compiled (from the horse's mouth, as Anna Russell says) to prevent the genus from becoming as extinct as the moa. They are fascinating, these ditties, speaking as they do of love and death, hardship and employment—the basic things of social life. They may be as simple as nursery rhymes, or complex as a Beethoven melody; they are always appealing and memorable, for it is only through generations of memory that we have them at all; and their chief quality is an enduring charm, to hold attention in all ages, all times.

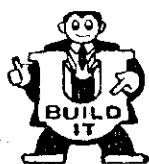
The series of American folk song recordings currently heard (National stations) called *All Day Singing* is therefore within everybody's taste, and contains songs that anyone can enjoy—or even sing. Henry Walter, who intro-

duces the programmes, is an illuminating and friendly evangelist for the music, and links together types of songs to make a consistent recital of each programme. The various singers are expert in their job, and have a convincing delivery; emotionally the impact is nil, though a "deadpan" voice can sometimes actually intensify a highly-charged song. One feature of many of the songs is the modal nature of the tunes, which seems to place their origin centuries ago, though, of course, this could be coincidence; but some are certainly derived from European songs, as the great collector Cecil Sharp found many years ago—for instance, one duet called "Jimmy Randal," which started in life as "Lord Randal's Lover"; while another had the words of "Tavern in the Town"—but quite a different tune. Others again are purely New World, with words rooted in American life—often of pioneer times—and music which is simple and direct, though by no means as banal as most of the cowboy-type songs. Mr Walter is doing an excellent job here, especially in bringing this music to our notice; but I feel the real credit still belongs to the people who long ago poured out their feelings in the songs themselves.

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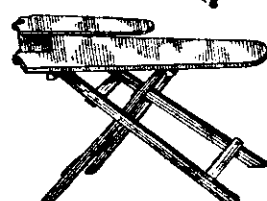
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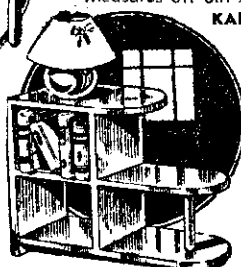
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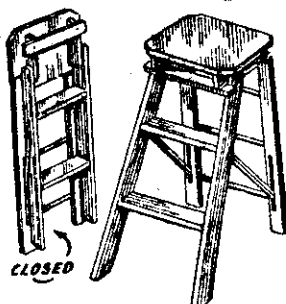
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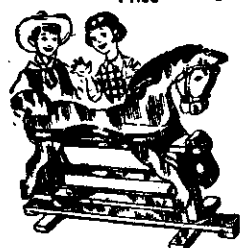
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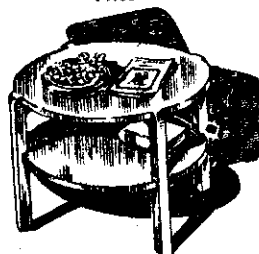
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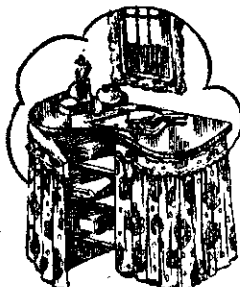
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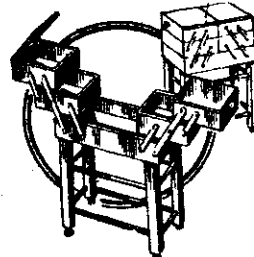
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