

Seagoon, and explosions ensue, figuratively if not always literally. They're too much alike, considering the Hancock script lacks the finesse of the Goons. But Hancock himself has that touch of tragic dignity which has always been the mark of the perfect fool. And he's human. The Goons might have come from another planet. I prefer men to space-men.

We also have Gert and Daisy in *Floggit's*, sounding older than they did 20 years ago, but not as much older as you'd expect, remembering they were no chickens then. They're dreadfully corny, but they've got something. And we have Archie, for whom I have little love, and *Radio Roadhouse*, for which, I regret to say, I haven't much more this year. Some time ago we had the BBC *Variety Parade*, one or two episodes apiece from other comedies, seemingly chosen to show how right the BBC was not to send the series out in their entirety. But they might have sounded better if we'd had more episodes to judge from.

For a niggle has been niggling. Are even the best of these comedies as funny as they seem? While you're laughing it's hard to take an objective look at why you're laughing. When I've tried the experiment the result has often appalled me. I'm apparently in the grip of some psychological necessity. I read somewhere that Bob Hope once lost his script for a short time and ad-libbed with disconnected and meaningless phrases. The audience laughed as loud as ever. He is said to have emerged somewhat shaken from the experience. So am I being converted to the *Goons*, or conditioned?

Too much speculation. On with the motley! But I wish they'd give Sabrina a rest, whoever she might be.

—R.D.McE.

Caught in the Act

"SNAPSHOTS OF MY SENIORS" was the title of a most engaging talk I heard last week by Hesketh Pearson, recalling the ebullient personalities of Chesterton and Belloc. By way of introduction to his chosen pair, Pearson recalled the great intellectual quartet they made with Shaw and Wells, all scraping away on their chosen instruments for dear life, united in pairs, with two Catholics and two Socialists, yet inspired soloists, too, improvising the most spirited and invigorating cadenzas with a total disregard for the prevailing harmony. There has been nothing like them since. Chesterton appears as a Falstaffian character, not only in respect to his bulk, but in his love of life, of beer, of food, and of young people: there was a Shakespearian delight in the man. Belloc, on the other hand, was much less demonstrative, more elusive and bizarre, from the pages of Cervantes perhaps, not quite Quixote, not quite Panza; something between the two. Pearson's account of how Belloc held up a long queue at a railway booking office with a long and precise account of his financial difficulties, and also the physical difficulties of reaching his destination, was pure Cervantes. The queue strained and sweated behind him, and finally, one man began to swear echoing. Belloc turned round, presented the man with a volume of trigonometry, and resumed. Both men had trouble with trains, and Hesketh Pearson recalled Chesterton's famous telegram to his wife: "Am at Wolverhampton. Where ought I to be?" The talk was splendidly evocative of a vanished world.

—B.E.G.M.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 26, 1957.

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