



★ **SPEAKERS** taking part in 3YC's four-hour Hallowe'en programme are (above, left to right) John de la Bere, Professor Arnold Wall, George Benson, William Scannell, J. G. A. Pocock, C. Foster-Browne and (at left) Bernard Smyth and W. Hart-Smith

HALLOWE'EN and MAGIC



THOUGH the reason for the custom has long been forgotten, people still say when someone sneezes, "Bless you!" The reason is that once, when life was full of the miracles of saints and the wizardry of devils and necromancers, it was believed that a sneeze might force the soul out of the body, and, before it could get back in, a lurking devil was liable to enter. Saying "God bless you," however, frightened devils away. Thus, changed by time into mere shadows of their former strength, the old superstitions are with us still. Some, like unlucky days and numbers, still inspire a faint echo of the old dreads; others—and the northern hemisphere's Hallowe'en festival is the classic example—have become a harmless source of fun and excitement.

On the night of Hallowe'en—Saturday, October 31—3YC will be devoting four hours, from 7.0 until 11 p.m. to a special programme about this mysterious festival, a programme that also delves into magic, both black and white. Contributors include John de la Bere, William Hart-Smith, Professor Arnold Wall, George Benson, William Scannell, Dr John Pocock, Bernard Smyth and Charles Foster-Browne, and the evening is arranged so that listeners can tune in at any stage and find the selected section perfectly coherent. Speech is

interspersed with music and a dramatisation of Max Beerbohm's story *The Happy Hypocrite* is included.

It is suspected that the ancient fires festival on Allhallow Even, or Hallowe'en as it has come to be called, marked the beginning of the Celtic year. There is no doubt, however, about the fact that this was one time of the year when it was believed the spirits of the dead returned to their old homes to share the fruits of the past season. And if these spirits were approached in the right way they sometimes gave valuable information on the future.

On the ancient Druidical celebrations were grafted some of the characteristics of the Roman festival in honour of Pomona, in which apples and nuts played a prominent part. Then, at Cluny in 998, the abbot is said to have been persuaded by a pilgrim that this was the time when souls in purgatory would most benefit from prayer, and two feasts were instituted: All Saints on November 1, and All Souls on November 2. In Catholic countries it has since been the custom to pray at gravesides on All Souls. Aiming to restore belief to its early purity, reformers of the Church of England removed the Feast of All Souls because "it encouraged ideas of the dead that were entirely unchristian." Recently, however, no doubt feeling that superstition is no longer a real danger,

the Feast was restored to the Church of England Calendar, and included in the Prayer Book of 1928.

In the early years of this century, Hallowe'en bonfires were still to be seen in the highlands of Scotland and Wales, and also in some outlying districts of England and Ireland. But, after thousands of years, it seems that the custom has virtually disappeared within only a few decades. The games, too, and the little rituals that persuade spirits to reveal the future may soon be forgotten. At the moment, however, there must be many people in New Zealand, especially those born in Scotland, who have memories of bobbing for apples or observing the manner in which nuts, when placed on a hot grate, burned together.

The most common way of bobbing or "dooking" for apples was for girls to drop secretly marked fruit into a tub of water. One by one the young men would kneel beside the tub and with their hands behind their backs try to catch an apple between their teeth; those who were successful would then know which of the girls was most likely to make them a satisfactory wife. After paring an apple one tossed the unbroken skin over the left shoulder, and the initial it most resembled upon hitting the ground would be that of either the Christian or surname of one's future spouse. Girls would also sit before a mirror eating an apple and combing their hair, hoping for an instant to see the face of their true-love reflected. Two nuts placed on the hot upper bar of a grate or on burning coal were supposed to have similar powers of prediction. If the two burned evenly together the couple they represented were well matched and would remain faithful; but if one should crack or suddenly dart sideways, this particular partner was certain to have a "roving eye."

Hallowe'en has now come to be almost exclusively the property of children. In the United States pumpkins are converted into macabre jack o' lanterns, guests turn up at parties disguised as witches, ghosts, pirates and so on, and

children come begging at the door—not for the traditional "soul cakes," but for candy specially wrapped by manufacturers in orange and black.

The first speaker in 3YC's *Hallowe'en and Magic* will be John de la Bere, a Lecturer in Mathematics at Canterbury University, who will discuss the origins of the festival. William Hart-Smith will then speak of magical beliefs existing among the Australian aboriginals, and Professor Arnold Wall will read an episode from the reminiscences of his old friend Sir Arthur Dudley Dobson, the pioneer surveyor after whom Arthur's Pass is named. Professor Wall also quotes from the Grimm Brothers and plays part of Humperdinck's opera *Hansel and Gretel*. The fascination of the supernatural for other composers will be discussed by George Benson, who will introduce Tchaikovsky's "Manfred" Symphony with readings from Byron's poem. *The Enemies*, a sombre story by Dylan Thomas, will be read by William Scannell to illustrate a description of magical beliefs still held in parts of Britain; and, dramatised by G. C. A. Wall and produced by Bernard Kearns, Max Beerbohm's *The Happy Hypocrite* will provide light relief. This will be followed by an extract from *The Magic of Aleister Crowley*, by John Symonds, read by Dr John Pocock. After discussing Mussorgsky's preoccupation with the sinister side of the supernatural, Bernard Smyth will invite C. Foster-Browne to round off the evening with a description of how composers have attempted to express in music man's ultimate supernatural conception: the goodness and mercy of a Supreme Being.

A programme like *Hallowe'en and Magic* demands close co-operation between Programme, Talks and Productions officers, and Arnold Wall, Bernard Kearns and Bessie Pollard have tackled the problem with enthusiasm. As one might expect, Bessie Pollard's wide musical experience has proved invaluable. For mid-March of next year these three hope to produce a similar programme linking up many things traditionally associated with that month.



BERNARD KEARNS

BESSIE POLLARD

G. C. A. WALL