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the plum pudding in Otago could not so dull the critical faculties of listeners as to make them accept *The Skeleton Key* as genuine radio drama. The sentimental memories awakened in some human derelicts in an English hotel boarding-house by the broadcast of a Strauss waltz were calculated to thrill no one. If anything at all was to be gleaned from this play, it was a realisation of the devastating dreariness of the popular Anglo-Saxon ideal of romance as mirrored in the youthful love affairs of these characters. We were presented with a monotonous series of gallant adventures round the Mediterranean, with the world well lost for the embrace of a dark stranger in a gondola. Little wonder then that they all seemed such a dissatisfied lot afterwards. The producer intended no doubt to evoke an atmosphere of wistful regret for the roseate past; what he actually evoked was nausea.

—K.J.S.

L'Automobile est Mobile

I RECOMMEND "Car of Death" (2YD, Tuesday, December 28) to all those listeners who like their history well hung. Actually the *Passing Parade* people achieve an even riper effect with less recent material, but it's amazing what they can do with events of comparative freshness. "Car of Death" is the name given by the authors to the six-seater red sedan in which the Archduke Ferdinand was riding when he was assassinated. Thereafter it became harbinger or agent of death for all its owners. First the Austrian general who commands it loses a vital battle and is hustled into a mental hospital, subsequent owners commit suicide, are killed in accidents, or file petitions of bankruptcy. For one owner the vehicle, having apparently conceived an illogical fondness for him, refuses to start. The car, in spite of the prowess with which it demolishes younger and stouter models with never a scratch itself, gets a bad name, but no enterprising dealer thinks of painting it black or filing off the engine number. One owner, in fact (a victim surely of Scriptwriter's Inertia), goes so far as to advertise for a chauffeur to drive "a red six-seater sedan," and gets no replies. It is not till 1927 that "its evil purpose accomplished" the car is destroyed and "its influence ended for ever." But I find myself wishing that the scriptwriter had given us as many details of its death as of its life. There is possibly a special ritual to be observed (as with vampires) in destroying a vehicle possessed by evil influences. Who knows but what road accidents today may not be caused by the incorporation in later models of spare parts from the original Red Terror?

Warm and Human

THERE was a strong suggestion of going to town about the scriptwriter's approach to the NZBS feature programme *They Came To Stay*. It was somebody's big chance, and determination to make the most of it led to a cer-

tain exuberance of phrase—a tendency to refer to New Zealand as The Land of the Long White Cloud. The narrator too was more than anxious to do justice to the lovingly-fashioned sentiments entrusted to him, and adopted from start to finish the Grand Manner and the organ voice, appropriate tribute perhaps to the importance of the subject. But for all that it was a good programme, a warm and human programme. The D.P.'s spoke for themselves, some in the stumbling laboured English gained in their eight weeks' tuition at Pahiatua, others with the lilting fluency of previous acquaintance. They told their stories unemotionally, stories of husbands murdered and children lost, or perhaps just stories of finding one's feet in a strange and alien country. But they told them with deadly effect. And their simplicity and sincerity took away some of the desk-made flavour from phrases about "this country where opposition is an expression of personal belief, not a passport to eternity," and illuminated their essential validity.

—M.B.

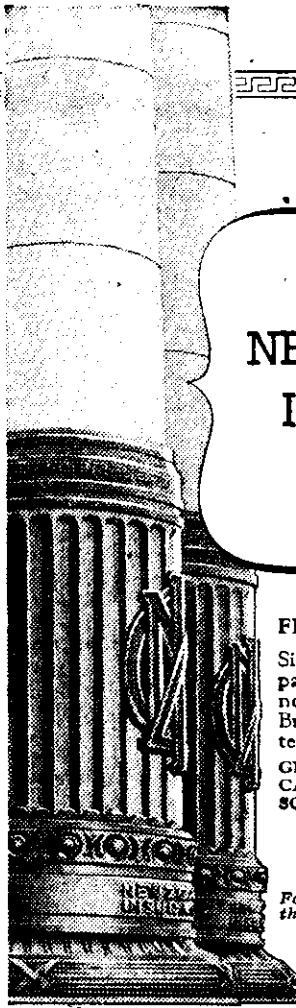
Splendid Performance

OVER Christmas I heard a considerable number of broadcasts of carols from all kinds of sources, but the programme which sticks in my memory was the really splendid performance from 2YA of *The Christmas Story*, a fantasia for solo voices, chorus and strings arranged by Thomas Gray and broadcast under the direction of W. Roy Hill with Studio Singers, and the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra led by Ruth Pearl. Mr. Gray's skilled arranging, especially for strings, has been an unobtrusive factor for a long time in many a New Zealand broadcast, and the whole collection of carols hung together splendidly. The singers, among whom could be recognised several Wellington soloists, were really excellent, and the string playing was delightful. It was truly a finished performance. The only thing I would have wished away was the inclusion of Tchaikovsky's *Legend* with its over-sentimentalised story of the Child Christ and the roses, which went poorly with the noble simplicity of the carols.

Expostulation

ONE of the works which seems to me to show what Purcell might have done had he lived longer is that extraordinary song *The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation* which sends cold shivers up my back whenever I hear it, which is as often as possible; I shall never forget an electrifying performance by Isobel Baillie in the Victoria College music room. With pleasurable anticipation, then, I listened in to a broadcast of it from 2YA recently by Alison Cordery. I was not disappointed. Alison Cordery sang it really well; her words in particular being very clear. It is a song that needs finished technical singing as well as loving care, but the final result is Purcell at his very best. I have never been able to hear in Purcell's instrumental music the delights which his admirers seem to find, but his vocal music is in another class altogether to me, and I love this song most of all.

—D.M.



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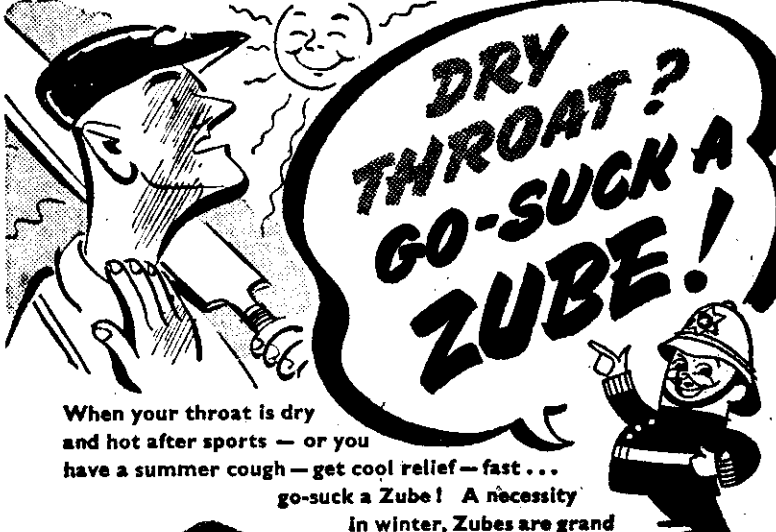
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