

about the chances of life. Quite a change, in fact, from the highly-coloured traveller's tale and the formal literary talk.

The Common Touch

[I]T seems to me that to conduct several weekly radio sessions and still hold the interest of listeners requires either complete detachment and insensitivity or exceptional resilience and awareness of public taste. The strain of selecting music, material and speakers for these programmes must be as wearing as being the gag-man for a radio comedian. Rod Talbot, whose *Diggers*, *Turning Back the Pages*, and *Men, Motoring and Sport* sessions have been heard for so long, seems to hold his public as much by his "common touch" as by his skill in picking bright, out-of-the-ordinary music. Even those who find Mr Talbot's voice over-lugubrious get pleasure from his public-spirited admonitions to sportsmen, his range of material and the experts on all kinds of esoteric sports, crafts and trades whom he dredges up. These sessions have about them something of the atmosphere of a club, one in which fish-stories are solemnly compared and for membership of which bonhomie is the only requirement. And it is worth while listening through talks on swordfishing and motor fuels for the sake of hearing recordings as nearly risqué as the authorities will allow.

—J.C.R.

Behind the Beyond

AFTER undergoing my first appointment with *The Man in Black* I flipped back the pages of my *Listener* to see what effect constant participation in this high voltage knee-knocker had had on the compère himself. After one session (R.L.S.'s *Markheim*, and extremely well done) my withers felt pleasantly wrung, but before enrolling myself as an addict I felt it my duty to study the effects of addiction as revealed in the features and general appearance of Valentine Dyal himself, the man who, having kept all his Appointments with Fear, is now throwing his spotlight on to some more of those dim and clammy regions beyond the pale, *au-dessous du subconscient*, etc. The BBC photograph (publicity, admittedly) shows him as a handsome young man of distinguished normality. Far from growing white in a single night his hair is scarcely greying at the temples. Far from standing on end it is neatly slicked down. The hands that grasp the script appear not to quiver, nor do the knuckles stand out whitely. It looks therefore as though *The Man in Black* is a session in which one can confidently immerse oneself. Like the recommended cold plunge this half-hour of spine-chilling leaves the listener glowingly braced for the lukewarmness of everyday living.

The Essential Barrie

J. M. BARRIE'S *The Will* has more Calvinism and less conceit (I use the word in a literary sense) than most of his plays, and on stage is inclined to be a little dreary. But the BBC production (heard from 2YC recently) turned out quite sprightly. This was due in part I think to the fact that the radio version demands the provision of a narrator, and the essential Barrie of the stage directions, missed in a visual

presentation, could therefore be included. The players managed to convey the passing of time, with its corrosion of appearance and character, just as well as if they had been provided with a change of clothing and an extra dusting of talcum powder on the whiskers (of course they had the narrator to murmur "Forty Years On" in the background) and the general effect was convincing and impressive.

—M.B.

Bringing Back the Past

RADIO is not quite so evanescent an art as we often suppose. The word trembles on the tongue of the speaker, is uttered, transmitted and becomes, apparently, no more than a brief memory. And so, too, with music. But in actual fact an extraordinary amount of radio material is saved from oblivion by being recorded. Speeches, commentaries, discussions, even local musical programmes, often come on the air in recorded form, or may be recorded as they are broadcast. This material will form precious archives for future historians, for, presumably, the Broadcasting Service will not follow the example of the films and make a bonfire of what is no longer in use. Occasionally, too, we can already use this mass of recorded material for historical purposes. Winston McCarthy drew largely on these resources for his memorial programme on the death of Lovelock. McCarthy contented himself with a brief, restrained account of Lovelock's career and it was undoubtedly the three recordings of Lovelock's speeches which stirred listeners' emotions. Nothing could have brought back more poignantly memories of the man himself and of the attitudes and ideals he represented for his countrymen than his own simply spoken words. In programmes such as this radio demonstrates that immediacy of appeal which it possesses pre-eminently over all other organs of communication.

Lady Luck

WE are all tempted to exaggerate the part chance plays in human affairs. "If Cleopatra's nose had been half an inch longer," we speculate. "If the absent-minded scientist had not jumbled his test-tubes" . . . "If the prospector had not picked up the nugget to throw at his dog" . . . And so on. Idle speculations, but we know very well, like the child with a fairy-tale, that we are just enjoying a sort of make-believe. However the 1YZ programme *A Matter of Luck*, broadcast on Wednesday evenings, seeks to exploit our amiable weakness and would have us believe that scientific achievement is a matter of luck at bottom, and not the product mainly of hard work and hard thought. These broadcasts, apparently so harmless—and on interesting topics, would certainly infuriate a scientist. The programme insists too on its authenticity but it is difficult to know where this begins or ends. The dramatised scenes must obviously be inventions, and possibly some of the characters are, too. Did Sir James Dewar, the 19th Century physicist, have such very positive views on the evils of a classical education, one wonders?

—K.J.S.

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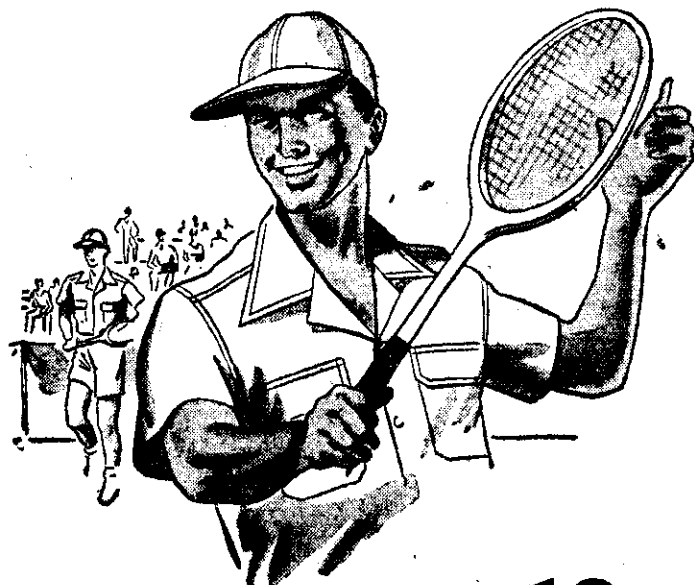
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