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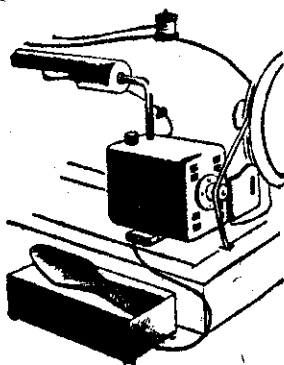
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RADIO REVIEW

SOUNDS WITHOUT SENSE

I HAVE always regarded those people who could read a musical score as being possessed of some superior kind of black magic. But I am beginning to wish that more of our scriptwriters could develop a little of the cult, because some of them, apparently, are tone deaf.

Writing a stage play and writing a novel call for two different techniques. With a novel the sense and rhythm can or should be conveyed by the eye and the intelligence. There is also, of course, an inward ear which listens as well as assimilates. But with the stage play there is more than this. The playwright must set down his dialogue while actively listening in to what his characters are saying. If what they say doesn't sound right, then he isn't a playwright. If this applies to the stage scene where eye and ear are allied to intelligence to assimilate the plot and characterisation, how much more so is this listening technique necessary for the radio scriptwriter—and how often it seems that it is absent.

These remarks are provoked by one or two anguished moments lately, when bothered announcers grappled with heavily-worded scripts carrying the minimum of sound value. Scriptwriters should by now realise that a sentence which looks all right, which conveys sense and meaning quite adequately to the average reader, can sound plain awful over the radio. Simplicity seems to be the absolute minimum of necessity, and simplicity seems to be the one trait which is by-passed or disregarded. A case in point was during one Woman's Session recently, when the sentence, "A phenomenal facility for lyric writing," stumped the young lady who was competing a session on the life of one of our musicians. I don't wonder at it either. Try looking at "phenomenal facility for lyric writing." The sense comes to you at once. But try speaking it and you get as tangled up as any would-be King of Quiz when asked to mouth a tongue-twister.

Then there was the poor announcer who, on New Year's Day, told all male listeners that if they wished for sartorial splendour, they had only to go to Messrs. So and So to get the overcoat of their dreams. This wouldn't be fair even under ordinary circumstances, but coming just after New Year's Eve, it was quite sadistic.

—Sycorax

Sweet Water

INEXPLICABLY broadcast from 1YA this Sunday afternoon in place of the last of the Reith Lectures by Bertrand Russell (which have been presented hopelessly out of order) was a splendid

talk on Caernarvon Castle by E. Morgan Humphreys. I have heard a couple of BBC talks recently which recalled to me some phrases in a new novel, "Pity about that girl's voice. She might just as well have had a nice Lancashire accent. But they will send people to those awful schools." However, Mr. Humphreys' quiet, pleasant voice, with its slight Welsh accent, was admirably suited to his informative and evocative script, which intimately described the noble castle built by Edward I (in sight of which he lives) and which lucidly summarised its importance in the history of Wales. There was an unimplied irony in his eyewitness account of the investing at Caernarvon of the last Prince of Wales and some homely details, such as the fact that the heat suffered by those present in formal costume led to the discovery that the castle's ancient well

still yielded sweet water. I hope this programme is not a stray, and that we will hear others as good later in the same series.

Knaveish Tricks

THE standard of light musical programmes from 1YA's studio seems to me to be remarkably high. Although I have no special knowledge of these things, I feel that more than good singing and good musicianship is needed to make these sessions satisfying. To judge from the insipidity of some offerings from other stations, what is required as well is the drive and planning of some dynamic personality and also exceptional skill in the musical arrangements. Whoever is responsible for these things in "The Knaves" combination must be thanked for making this a session with character and a high entertainment value. Other things which give distinction to "The Knaves" programme, and differentiate it from, for instance, the amorphous 1ZB *Dinner at Eight* is its cohesion round the idea of new, and sometimes exceptionally ingenious, versions of old tunes, and the absence of both pomposity and smart-aleckism from the commentary. The noise of the arrival of an old jalopy which announces the coming of the Knaves may suggest the appearance of a cargo of corn, but it has become for me, on the occasions on which I hear them, the signal for a cheerful and smooth fifteen minutes.

—J.C.R.

Simple Souls

WHAT is it, I sometimes wonder, that makes me rush home from that weekly treat for the housewife, Friday night in town, to be in time for the

(continued on next page)