

imaginary den of wild beasts, was very good. Sentimentality dogs the footsteps of anyone writing of his youth, but despite his passion Mr. Scriven avoided that, too. One point, however, did arise. George Orwell, I think it was, commenting on the English Public School system suggested that the Englishman's school life was so overwhelming that in after life he often suffered from an arrested development, his mind enslaved in the circumstances of his youth. The past can be overvalued in relation to the present and despite his assurances that all is well if the boy lives on in the man, I felt that Mr. Scriven was struggling back a little too earnestly.

—Westcliff

Farmers and Friends

STATION 4YA's *Country Calendar* is an attractive regular programme which, since we are most of us not far from the soil, has more than a purely rural interest. The talks heard in this session are by experts, the people who have lived with the problems they discuss. I have enjoyed most of them, though they vary both in construction and delivery; but memorable to me, in the Department of Agriculture series, was that given recently by Sefton Line on bee-keeping. It was both lucid and highly informative; but what gave it extra charm was the love and sympathy it showed for the bee, a highly individual creature, with a distaste for artificial perfume, and a liking for a home "facing east to get the morning sun, with a wide panoramic view over undulating country." *Country Calendar* is more than a series of talks, however. Its compère, Stan Whyte, with brief comments, notices and snippets of history, welds it into a whole that has its own special flavour. And it was an inspired choice, I felt, to include in *Country Calendar*, David McLeod's talks, and *Me and Gus*, which round off the present programmes very nicely.

The Kite

THE KITE, a dramatised version of Somerset Maugham's short story, was heard recently from 4YA in an excellent performance by a band of NZBS players who remained, to my regret, anonymous. *The Kite* makes a good play—as many listeners, having already seen it (though with a happy ending) in the film *Quartet*, would know. For this reason I felt inclined, despite the quality of the entertainment, to carp a little at the choice of such well-worn material. If the producer was bent on producing a Maugham story, could not one of the many less familiar ones have been chosen? Was it a fear of the untried that dictated the choice? Or was it a chorus of imaginary listeners chanting "Tell me the old, old story?"

—Loquax

More Voice

LISTENING to a VOA programme from 1YA recently, I thought, as I sometimes do when Verdi is sung, how easy it is for us to underestimate the qualities of such a composer until we hear someone else trying to write in the same way. Sentimentally, throbby Puccini may at times be, he may have a monotonous predilection for the woman

who loves not wisely but too well (although not everybody would accept Professor Dent's phrase "slobby erotics"), and some arias from *Butterfly* and *Bohème* may have been rubbed threadbare. Yet his dramatic sense, his feeling for mood and character, and his translation of passion into melody shine out by comparison with his recent imitators. Perhaps it is only when Puccini's manner is mixed with Coca-cola and diluted with brackish water, as in Menotti's work, that we recognise his artistry and his individuality. The time is overdue for a revaluation of the great Italian operatic writers. They have a good chance of receiving it so long as their operas are sung, as on some of the VOA programmes, with the "voce, voce, e poi voce" Rossini demanded of an opera singer.

On the Level?

MY first hearing of *Twenty Questions* left me with a blend of amusement and scepticism. It was certainly diverting to hear the mixture of wild irrelevancies and near *double-entendres* offered by the panel in quest of such elusive objects as Costa's moustache, a seaside pier, and a "double." It isn't the first time that a parlour game has been adapted to make good radio entertainment (even if some of them grow to resemble games invented by a despairing hostess at the end of a hot, sticky children's party), but *Twenty Questions* with a good question-master and an alert panel provided half an hour of good fun on a good level. The scepticism came from the fact that the team seems sometimes to identify the most improbable objects with the most improbable rapidity. It is ungrateful of me to suspect that one at least of the team (Miss Padel?) is a "plant," primed with just enough information to make the team not appear too witless?

—J.C.R.

Brief Flowers

THE privilege of listening to the House in session is one I have no difficulty in denying myself. Reared as I have been in the NZBS tradition that the listener always comes first I have a firm objection to being disregarded, an objection probably reinforced recently by an unfortunate experience I had when trying to get 2YD and finding some single-minded ham sitting astride the wave-length (never mind—I got his number). He was telling all his friends in Basic English that poor old Bill was quite browned off—he'd got what it takes but his reception was still crook. But an electioneering address is a different matter. Here my presence is definitely felt, I am the unseen guest at every gathering care is taken that I shall hear the candidate's apt reply to the interjection while being spared the doubtless ribald remark that occasioned it, I am deferred to as a member of "that larger audience that is 'with me tonight in spirit.'" And, in the sunlight of my unseen smile, bloom those flowers of oratory which, we are told, have largely withered from the House where, at the moment, no birds sing.

—M.B.

The broken step



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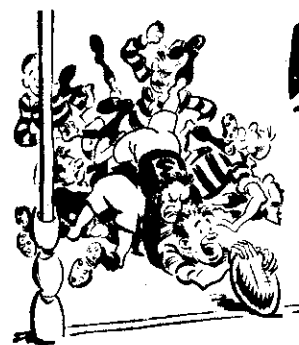
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