

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

THE people of the Commonwealth who so recently waited through anxious weeks for news of the health of the King will be a vast audience for his Christmas broadcast this year. As usual this will be preceded by a world-wide BBC programme, its subject *The Gifts of Christmas*. It is hoped to make links in this programme between a fighting man in Korea and his home in Britain; a mother in a Displaced Persons' camp in Germany and her children in Australia; the workers and citizens of Boys' Town, Modena, in Italy, and former prisoners of war who were given help when escaping and have in turn helped the settlement. There will be visits to a Red Cross blood transfusion unit in Nairobi, and to Jamaica, ravaged not so long ago by a hurricane. It is planned to bring in the voices of Korean children singing at a Christmas party behind the firing line, in the hope that they will touch the conscience of the listening world. And, of course, with the other members of the Commonwealth New Zealand will make its contribution.

Broadcast messages will be heard at Christmas from the Prime Minister (Mr. Holland) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nash), and on New Year's Eve listeners will have a message from the Governor-General, Lord Freyberg.

Christmas Day: Messages from the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition (YA, YZ, ZB stations, 1XH, 2ZA, 12.30 p.m.).

Boxing Day: *The Gifts of Christmas* (2YA, 2.0 a.m.; YA and YZ stations, 9.4 a.m.).

The King's Broadcast (following *The Gifts of Christmas* broadcasts as above, and also from YA, YZ, ZB and X stations at 7.15 a.m., and YA and YZ stations at 12.30 and 6.45 p.m.).

New Year's Eve: The Governor-General's Message (YA, YZ, ZB and X stations, and 2ZA, 7.0 p.m.).

ETERNAL STORY

AN original nativity play, *Emmanuel*, in verse and poetic prose, is among the BBC's new programmes for Christmas, 1951. James Forsyth, its author, describes it as a humble attempt to present the drama of the Birth of Christ as fully and as vividly as he is able. While making no effort to give a "slant of interpretation" to the eternal story, Forsyth portrays Herod as a tragic, self-destroying figure. He sees the Child's fate in the hands of the people of Bethlehem; puts more wisdom into the words of the Shepherd with his new-born lamb than all the utterances of the Three Wise Men; and he gives a speaking part to Mary. The author has said that he would like to remove the hope or presumption that the play is a direct contribution to either an old-fashioned faith or a new-fangled scepticism. It is another account of a sacred story. And he hopes that it may present some meaning and hold some loveliness both for people who know and celebrate the happy time of Santa Claus, with all its festivities, and the Christmas of the Church's devotional celebration of the birth of its Saviour. Mervyn Johns is heard as the Shepherd, Peggy Bryan as Mary, John Laurie as Joseph, and Andrew Cruickshank as Herod. The Three Wise Men are played by Heron Carvic, Howieson

Culff and John Turnbull. The music, based upon oriental and antique themes, is composed and directed by Henry Boys, and Donald McWhinnie is producer.

Monday, December 24, 3YC at 7.36 p.m.; Tuesday, December 25, 4YC at 7.30 p.m.; Saturday, December 29, 2YC at 7.30 p.m.

SNAPDRAGON & PUDDING

THE BBC's London Forum organisers claim that their programmes contain the best brains and best talkers that can be found to discuss, informally, with wit and insight, problems of the day. New Zealand listeners are to have an opportunity of hearing what attitudes the brains and talkers, as represented by Sir Stuart Wilson, Compton Mackenzie and Professor C. E. M. Joad adopt towards the spirit of Christmas. Gilbert Harding is chairman. They will survey the season from the viewpoint of those who are no longer young (and who, incidentally, feel they can now spend Christmas as they wish and not in the way expected of them) and they go into it thoroughly. The spotlight is thrown on the traditional English Christmas—or is it the traditional Dickens Christmas?—and in a discussion on Christmas fare it becomes apparent that Compton Mackenzie is a purist in snapdragon while Wilson and Joad differ violently on the constituents of Christmas pudding.

Tuesday, December 25, 1YA at 3.0 p.m.; 4YZ at 1.30 p.m.; 3YC, 7.30 p.m.

THEATRE ROYAL

WHEN Hugh Ross Williamson's play, *Queen Elizabeth* was broadcast by the BBC early this year Stephen Williams wrote in the *Radio Times* that it was "to say the least, a gallant attempt at a full-length portrait of Elizabeth." Such a portrait can not have been easy to draw in a play which takes about an hour and a half to broadcast. Yet the author has brought out well the violently opposed sides of the queen's personality.

The play, which is to be broadcast in New Zealand on BBC transcriptions, deals with a single incident in Elizabeth's life—her projected marriage with the Duke of Anjou, when she was forty-five and he twenty years



younger. It was Elizabeth's last courtship, and the match was bitterly opposed by her people.

Dame Edith Evans, one of the most famous figures on the contemporary English stage, whom some listeners will have seen in films—*The Last Days of Dolwyn* was one of them—plays the title role in *Queen Elizabeth*, and the supporting cast includes Laidman Browne as Lord Burleigh, Hugh Burden as the Baron de St. Marc, and Reginald Beckwith as Anjou.

Happy and Glorious, another play in a group which the BBC has aptly called *Theatre Royal*, has been "built" from Laurence Housman's collection of little plays about Queen Victoria. For many years the censorship ban on the representation of living or recently dead royalty kept the plays off the public stage in Britain. When the ban was lifted in the thirties they had an instant success with their tenderly witty treatment of the life and reign of Victoria. In *Happy and Glorious* the emphasis is upon Prince Albert and his relationship with the Queen, showing his gradual development from the diffident young Prince, a foreigner in a none-too-cordial England, to the wise counsellor who worked himself to death in the service of his adopted country. The Prince is played by Anton Walbrook and Queen Victoria by Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies.

Queen Elizabeth: 1YC, 9.30 p.m., Saturday, January 5.

Happy and Glorious: 4YC, 7.33 p.m., Tuesday, January 8.

TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

WHEN the world-famous *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*, held every year in King's College Chapel,

Cambridge, was broadcast in the BBC Home Service last Christmas Eve (as has been the case for the last 21 years) a shortened form was recorded so that the choral part of the Service could be heard virtually in its entirety. The peculiarly moving quality of this traditional act of worship is due largely to the sheer beauty of the singing and the nature of the Festival itself; but also, partly, to the acoustics and associations of that Chapel. The Service includes the Processional Hymn—*Once in Royal David's City*; and old European carols such as *Ding, Dong, Ding*, from Sweden, and *Hail!*

Blessed Virgin Mary, from 17th Century Italy. Basil Gray describes the scene both outside and inside the Chapel.

Monday, December 24, 3YC, at 10.0 p.m.; 1YC, at 10.2 p.m.; Tuesday, December 25, 4YZ, at 9.30 a.m.

HISTORICAL ROMANCE

OF all the books that Charles Dickens wrote, none is better suited to radio dramatisation than *A Tale of Two Cities*. In creating the character of Sidney Carton in this well-known story of the French Revolution (written in 1859) Dickens broke away from the fashion of the time, which was that a hero should be noble and utterly devoid of faults. He made a man full of errors and therefore full of interest. The author himself, an ardent actor, longed to play the role of Carton, but it was not until long after his death in 1870 that a stage version of the book—*The Only Way*—brought fame as Carton to Sir John Martin-Harvey. At the end of last year one of Britain's leading playwrights, Terence Rattigan, and an actor of the front rank, John Gielgud, dramatised the story and it was broadcast in the BBC Home Service, with Eric Portman, well-known actor of stage and screen as Carton, and Belle Chrystall as Lucie Manette. The producer was Cleland Finn.

Monday, December 31, 3YC, at 7.32 p.m.

PICK YOUR SCROOGE

DICKENS'S *Christmas Carol*, either read or dramatised, has become a tradition of Christmas listening. This year the tradition will be continued, though with what is probably a wider variety of Scrooges than ever before. Four different versions are to



be presented. The YA stations will broadcast a BBC version in which Scrooge is played by Alec Guinness, and there is a supporting cast of well-known BBC voices. Guinness will be heard in the same role in a *Towers of London* production, though this time the cast will include such J. Arthur Rank stars as John Mills, Googie Withers, Jean Simmons, Margaret Lockwood, Dirk Bogarde and Derek Bond. This version will come from the ZBs and two YZ stations. Listeners within reach of 1XH will be able to hear Lionel Barrymore's Scrooge, while those who are able to tune into 2XA will find Ronald Colman playing the same part. There should be a Scrooge, in fact, for every taste.

Sunday, December 23, 2XA, at 6.30 p.m.; Monday, December 24, 4YA, 10.0 p.m.; Tuesday, December 25, 1YA, 5.0 p.m.; 1YZ, 9.30 p.m.; 1XH, 9.4 p.m.; 2YC, 8.15 p.m.; 3YA, 4.0 p.m.; 3YZ, 2.0 p.m.; 4YZ, 11.0 a.m.; ZB stations and 2ZA, 6.30 p.m.; December 26, 2YA, 1.0 a.m.