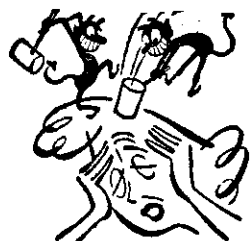
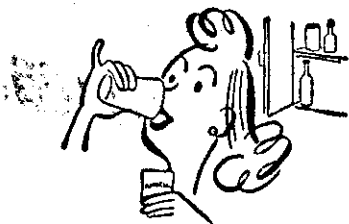




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RADIO REVIEW

The Stimulating Past

THE number of historical plays broadcast recently suggests that script-writers are now finding the past as stimulating as crime and fantasy. During the past week I heard three lengthy historical plays, each good, but together rather too uniform a diet for the period. Hugh Ross Williamson's *Queen Elizabeth*, as one might expect from this shrewd deliver into historical episodes still coloured in the popular mind by Whig prejudices, was a fine study of the complex Queen, with the great Edith Evans at her imperious best in the title-role. *Right Well Beloved Lady*, a piece based loosely on the Paston Letters, and telling of Marjorie Paston's steadfast love for the family bailiff, was treated as a romantic affair, well enough done, but giving us little of the feel of the times. In *The Other Heart*, an NZBS production which I thought compared very favourably with the BBC offerings, some of Auckland's best players lent their agreeable talents to a somewhat idealised version of Francois Villon's youthful escapades, which was chiefly remarkable for its scant treatment of Villon's poetry. Listening to these, I felt that radio historical plays are still at the "period fiction" stage, and that out of this group, only *Queen Elizabeth* came near that combination of historical accuracy and insight with human interest which Alfred Duggan, Patry Williams and Hope Muntz have achieved recently in the novel.

sen and Charles Lawrance. And now we have *Strange Destiny*, which submits a distorted version of the life of the eccentric Lady Hester Stanhope to the most cliché-ridden of soap-opera treatments. I have noticed that, while half-hour episode serials are usually good, the fifteen minute variety seems expressly designed for commercial stations, with all that that implies. Of course, this may be merely a perverse masculine reaction to something dear to the legitimate *Feminine Viewpoint* listener, but I am convinced, at least, that Hester is an unlucky name for this session; and I do know that as soon as that Inner Sanctum voice hollowly announces "Strange Destiny!" I switch off, often missing something good which comes later.

—J.C.R.

Passionate Russians

THE Slav soul veers between exaltation and despair, at one moment the pivot upon which the universe turns and the next less than a grain of sand in eternity; the result, it is said, of the vast Steppes where there is nothing to keep a sense of proportion. Yet beauty is likelier here than where there is order but no sense of the sublime, and for this reason I am deeply attracted towards some of the passionate Russians. They reflect depths of human experience and feeling which we tend to neglect to our own cost; in literature Dostoevsky, in music Tchaikovsky. In Tchaikovsky's music as I feel it he expresses the more negative mood, he is under the vast and lonely skies or, as it were, uses them as a sounding board. Strangely enough in listening to 3YC's Tchaikovsky programme it was in the *Capriccio Italien* played by the Philharmonia Orchestra that the distinctively Slav character was most evident, the loneliness, the melancholy sweetness and behind this the incantatory beat of the drums haunting the world, placing the listener on the threshold of a beautiful and yet awful Eden.

Mystical

AT the time when the Notornis was re-discovered in a valley which had scarcely been seen by European eyes, I could not help reflecting on the rush of almost mystical feeling which must have overtaken the Naturalists as they gazed on this virgin tract of country. On mentioning this to an Alpine enthusiast he suggested that the same experience overtook one upon conquering a hitherto unclimbed peak. "What a pity," I said, "that our alpine climbers don't turn their experiences into memorable prose and poetry." He replied that mountaineers would think this sentimental. Words failed me at this point. But now that Dr. N. E. Odell has drawn out the religious and mystical implications of mountain climbing, recalling the Periclean speech with which General Smuts unveiled a memorial on Table Mountain to Alpiners who had died for their country, it appears that all climbers are not embarrassed by their own enthusiasm. In the first of Dr. Odell's talks from 3YC eloquence and high feelings were not confused with sentimentality and one

Easy Authority

ONE of the best series I've heard from 1YC for months is *The Story of the Folk Song*, a series by Augusta A. Ford. It's not often that I feel that half an hour is too short a time for a talk; in this case, I could cheerfully hear twice the amount each time. The songs Miss Ford uses to illustrate her talks are nearly all unfamiliar and intriguing, and, I suspect, come from rare recordings in the possession of the speaker. There is time to hear only tantalising portions of some of these, and I would not care to sacrifice any of the informative and scholarly commentary. There would, indeed, be justification here for playing some of the songs twice through, once before the comments and once after. Miss Ford speaks with easy authority, if sometimes with a flattish intonation. However, her American accent gives piquancy to the programmes and in a way I cannot quite analyse seems to me extraordinarily appropriate to the material she presents.

Fly in the Face-Cream

STATION 1YA's *Feminine Viewpoint* continues to offer as much good fare for the masculine, as for the feminine, listener—which is as it should be. It is, above all, an excellent stream in which to fish for items one may have missed elsewhere; to my pleasure, I recently netted the elusive *James Bone's London*. The only fly in the face-cream is the serial. The organisers clearly take pains to find good material; yet *Hester's Diary* belonged with laxatives and tooth-paste and not cheek by jowl with Owen Jen-



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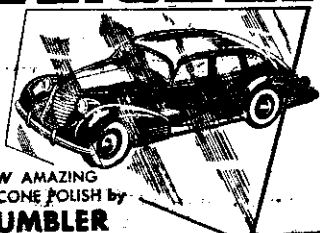
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