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## RADIO REVIEW

### The Sailor's Home

S. D. WATERS'S talk on improvement in fo'c'sle conditions in his series *Ships and Shipping*, illustrates the value of radio talks in collecting information on out-of-the-way subjects. Landsmen know vaguely what the bad old fo'c'sle life was like in steam as well as sail, but they might go for years without realising in detail just how bad it was—in Mr. Waters's justified word, "shocking." As a class, sailors are not articulate. The talk made me wonder just how far radio might be accelerating social reform. It is difficult to think of some 19th Century scandals lasting so long if there had been broadcasting to bring the news of them right into the home. It was a grim picture of life in the worse-conducted steamers that Mr. Waters painted; the cheerlessness and lack of comfort; the bare bones of living, in a cramped space; meals often eaten on the knees after the food had been carried over an open deck half the length of the ship.



Yet the grimmest part of the talk told of the work of the firemen who drove those luxury greyhounds of the Atlantic, the *Mauretania* and *Lusitania*, with coal at 25 knots. Behind the facade of passenger lounges and the prestige of high speed, there was plain hell. A description to that effect was given me once by a man who had been a steward in the *Mauretania*. As late as 1933, a steward in a big English liner (apparently *Atlantic*) said this to J. B. Priestley of his life: "Bad quarters. Working all hours. And no proper food and nowhere to eat it." It was very pleasant to hear Mr. Waters tell of the improvements (there have always been good ships): abolition of the fo'c'sle; single and double berth cabins; and comfortable, well-equipped mess-rooms.

Some listeners must have recalled Gilbert's naval fantasy of long ago:

A feather bed had every man,  
Warm slippers and hotwater can;  
Brown Windsor from the captain's store;  
A valet, too, to every four.

The joke has become reality for the Merchant Navy. —A.M.

### Not Enough Cream

STATION 1YD seems to me to have dwindled to poor relation status in Auckland radio. The original "New Deal" intention was, I recall, that it should be a "light" station, by contrast with the "semi-light" 1YA and the "serious" 1YC. But up to the present its potentialities are largely unexplored, while 1YA scrapes off the cream of the fun and games. Although some of its continuous music sessions are pleasant enough, the vague omnium gatherum titles—*Light and Bright*, *Music for Moderns*, *Orchestral Music* (sic)—which recall an earlier dispensation, make 1YD's programmes look especially drab and uninteresting. On the non-musical side, it seems to have become a dumping-ground for obsolescent ZB serials—Officer Crosby pounding his well-worn beat and History unveiling its jazzed-up unsolved mysteries. My recent listening convinces me that 1YD will die of galloping mediocrity unless it receives urgent attention. One field in which it could serve a valuable purpose is that of genuine jazz, even though 1YA now has the plum with *Jazz Club*, U.S.A. As it is, I find 1YD's brightest spots in such rare items as the recent *Groove-Juice Symphony* from *Opera in Vout*, which fascinated me, although my smattering of jive-talk doesn't run to a translation of the titles.

### Watery Dialogue

PERHAPS I have been spoiled recently by the excellent series of plays from 1YC on Saturday nights. *Trial and Error*, *Moby Dick* and the BBC *An Inspector Calls* made such a fine sequence that the NZBS production of James Parish's *The Lady Asks for Help* went off, not with a bang, but a whimper. This story of a husband who accidentally kills an annoying old flame of his wife, sees his friend arrested for murder, and needlessly gives himself up, might have made a neat fifteen-minute piece. Thinned out to an hour with watery dialogue, it resisted the

"I Know What I Think . . ."

### THE MIDDLE WAY

LAST night (March 27) on 1YC we reached the seventeenth talk in Augusta Ford's series on the folk song, and I look back over seventeen weeks of enjoyment. Mrs. Ford has never tried to be startling, has never tried to "sell" folk song to her listeners, but her talks have been a gold-mine to those interested in the simple art of unsophisticated peoples. We began with the early history of folk music and are now on more "specialist" topics like the recurrence of the Robin Hood theme; nothing has been omitted, and all has been presented in a most sympathetic manner. When half our radio programmes have a bias towards soap-opera and the rainbow bubbles of hit-tunes and the other half are presented for our edification it is a tonic to follow a programme of the middle way. Not all the sentimentality of the world goes into the popular hits, and not all the art is found in highly polished forms. Could we not have more studies of folk art? It is so much closer to the life of yours truly, Everyman.

—M.A.C.

(Readers are invited to submit comments, not more than 200 words in length, on radio programmes. A fee of one guinea will be paid after publication. Only one paragraph can be used each week. Contributions should be headed "Radio Review." Unsuccessful entries cannot be returned.)

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