

ENVOYS OF THE HEART

*HANDS are the envoys of contracting hearts,
Carry no blame, deserve no separate praise;
Clenched or unclenched are prompted in their parts
To sow small seeds or make a forest blaze.*

*Strong at the plough to make the farmstead bloom,
Deft at the loom to keep the body warm,
Hand holding hand can light a sunless room;
Or, quick to anger, raise a mortal storm.*

*Touching to kiss or clutching as they kill,
Heedless of hurt, as head and heart dictate,
Hands are the agents of constricting will
To build, or leave a city desolate.*

*Happy the man who with unsullied eyes
Can match desire with what such skill deserves;
Happy the hand whose ruling head is wise;
Happy the heart, whose smallest wish it serves.*

—Anton Vogt

the competent cast to say that this production had little excitement. Yet, in fact, the play contains some delightful anticipations of the later comedies; and one feels that a refreshing performance, such as the Stratford company recently gave of *As You Like It*, might replace it in the category of stageworthy Shakespeare.

—M.K.J.

The Singing Lute

OF all musical instruments, the lute is the one which has most hold upon my imagination, chiefly through Wyatt's poem, but also because it has a beautiful name. Not until I heard Rossiter's "What then is Love but Mourning," sung by Alfred Deller and accompanied by the lute in *English Song* (from 3YC), had I ever registered its precise musical nature. Fortunately for me the lute lived up to my irrational conception of it, the more so as a result of Alfred Deller's imitation of its plucked melody when he got to the "Dillo" refrain. Heddle Nash singing excerpts from the *On Wenlock Edge* song cycle also made pleasant listening. In fact almost the whole evening, which really began much earlier with the London Studio Recitals of songs by Vaughan Williams, Warlock, Moeran, Rowley and later Holst's *St. Paul's Suite*, formed an excellent introduction to the work of British composers and singers.

Meeting the Bradens

THERE are people who have been listening to *Dad and Dave of Snake Gully* for years, but of these I shall say nothing. There are others who followed Tommy Handley with the same avid devotion, and it is not worth my while trying to find out why. But for myself variety is the spice of humour and after a time any series which sticks to the same settings with the same kind of joke palls. For this reason I welcome *First Rehearsal*, now being heard from 3YA, with open arms—that is, so far as the duties of a critic permit. At a certain point, for instance, Bernard Braden turning to the conductor of the orchestra said that since the audience was recovering from their last item it was time to "hit 'em again." Now if he'd said that about the singing, the self-pitying songs, he'd have lost a joke and gained even more admiration. A pity they included the husband and wife scenes, too, because they are too close in spirit to those done by Ted Ray and Kitty Bluett. That's what I mean by a

critic welcoming a show with open arms: in the end he only offers a cold cheek.

—Westcliff

Talks for Women

THE decision to have a *Background to the News* talk fortnightly in the 2YA Women's Session is wise, I feel, particularly if all the talks are as broad in scope as Frank Simpson's first one—random thoughts occasionally channelled into homily, ranging from American scientists loitering round the North Pole on an ice floe to thoughts of our own weather men on Campbell Island, the recent discovery that the ocean bed radiates warmth, conjecture about the possible conquest of Everest. There was plenty to lead the imagination away from the narrow world of sink, stove and sand-pit; yet it was mercifully without the personal element which brings out the green-eyed monster in me when I listen to some ex-housewife's equally broadening travelogue. For contrast in this particular session we had a Home Science talk on "Food for Mother," which, unlike Mr. Simpson's, was written for women by a woman. It proceeded on the doubtless warranted assumption that the moron in Mother will, unless checked, lead her to chronic irritability and early grave through tea and toast for breakfast, tea and bread and butter for lunch, and a substantial afternoon tea which leaves her no appetite for dinner.

Percy French

THE BBC programme on Percy French was an example of the popular programme at its best. It was pleasingly compered by the composer's daughter, which gave the opportunity for a much more warmly personal presentation than a stranger could hope to achieve. Miss French's statement, "It was Father's ambition to play the banjo really well," might have sounded footling or false from other lips. And even the more ephemeral of the musical illustrations tended to make modern Tin Pan Alley sound, melodically at least, even tinnier.

—M.B.

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