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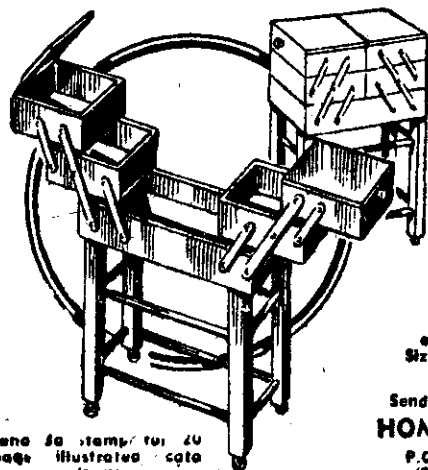
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Radio Review

CAUTIONARY TALE

I SUSPECT that it may have been Noel Coward's memorable film *Brief Encounter* that set the tone and pattern for a number of post-war stories about broken or damaged marriages—for example, in recent novels by Nigel Balchin and William Sansom, or (transferred to a rather different context) Graham Greene. Chetham Strode, who has already shown a flair for the topical play in *The Guinea Pig*, has written his own variant in *Background* (heard from 1YC), a study in the effect of divorce on children. Set in the Nigel Balchin country—rising barrister with country home—it showed barrister's wife about to make fresh start with barrister's lifelong friend, Uncle Bill. Only the three children seemed at all upset, and everyone was being frightfully civilised ("Of course, we can still be friends"), until the fourteen-year-old son let daylight into the situation by plugging dear old Bill with a pea-rifle. As a cautionary tale about divorce, the play made its point with precision and force; and the NZBS production was thoroughly expert. Nevertheless, the spectacle of high-minded selfishness in the upper-income brackets may perhaps induce in the rude, uncultured listener a sense of silent mirth.

Music from the Festival

IN a week of broadcasting from the Auckland Arts Festival, one was given the sense of being on familiar and safe ground. On Tuesday, the National Orchestra gave us Beethoven; on Thursday, Louis Kentner played César Franck and, again, Beethoven; on Saturday, an evening of opera, mainly of *Carmen* and *Lohengrin*. While the level of performance was understandably high, and the three evenings brought some rewarding things—the performance of the *Eroica*, for example—what one missed was a sense of freshness and discovery. In this respect, the concert of New Zealand composers (on the Friday) had a chance to score. Here, too, the quality of excitement was lacking—with a few notable exceptions, particularly the admirably sensitive rendering of Douglas Lilburn's sonata by Antonia Braidwood and Henry Shirley. But it was new

music being heard, and that surely is one of the functions of a festival. Apart from that, the week's music remained firmly anchored in the 19th Century, and the word that has to creep in sooner or later is "unadventurous."

—M.K.J.

The Personal Note

ALTHOUGH *Ships and Shipping* may have considerable interest for retired merchant seamen or those on leave it is only when the more personal note is sounded that the layman is aroused. Thus in one of the earlier sessions I became interested at the mention of the Pamir, more especially because I had listened to a report from on board the sailing ship before a voyage round the Horn. In the most recent national link-up I was again enlivened when S. D. Waters dealt with the improvement in the crews' quarters in the tramps which he had earlier described as the "slums of the sea." The side reflections, or those which lead back into tradition and history, or which project a sudden image of the Clyde workshops producing ships to replace those worn out after 25 years' service, are more interesting to me than the stream of facts and figures by themselves. I believe that if Mr. Waters were to develop the anecdote and bed his facts and figures down in it his session would gain in popularity.

Corn in Christchurch

ONCE upon a time I imagined that confidence was all that was required if people were to accomplish things. Since then my confidence has been shaken, and, while I believe we should have the faith and perseverance to keep on trying to do what we have set our hearts on, I see that imagination, sensitivity and an ability to take criticism are three equally important qualities in the completely artistic personality. We suffer, too, in this country, from our own uncritical audiences; the slap-dash element stops the really accomplished work, at any level of entertainment, from emerging. These observations have their present application not only in *On Stage Tonight*, but more particularly in the *Talent Quest*, the first session of which was recorded in the Civic Theatre and broadcast over 3ZB. A good deal of it had to be heard to be believed. The piano struggled manfully to cover the ineptitude of at least one singer, and a curious tone deafness marred a certain duet. Of course, the audience clapped furiously, although if one had stopped almost anyone at the door he

"I KNOW WHAT I THINK..."

A WINE FULLY MATURED

SHORT stories told on the radio do not often seem to make the grade. All the more credit, then, is due to G. C. A. Wall for his story "Atlanta in the Cellar" in the series "Slightly Out of True," now running on Thursdays from Christchurch. Perhaps it is a pity to pick out one of the tales, but this story seems to me so outstanding in its wit and charm that I feel its praise cannot be left unsung. The personality of this author and broadcaster comes across in full measure. His particularly pleasing voice, the easy and natural manner, the glorious absurdity of the plot, the portrayal of the characters combine to make an entrancing whole. Last and not at all least, is his use of vivid and unusual phrases: the not yet matured wine is "bumptious and callow," the matured is "sagacious and fit for a Governor-General," the rejected suitor walks away disconsolately, with a face "the colour of the Auckland 'Weekly News.'" This author has reached a high standard in the art of story writing and reading for radio.

—E.J.S.

(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. Contributions should be headed "Radio Review." Unsuccessful entries cannot be returned.)