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RADIO REVIEW

Wreckage in Valhalla

WAGNER'S *Ring* on the air is the ghost of a piece of giant-art. Certain things are still there in the music—the complex language of the leit-motifs, the orchestral resource, the singular beauty or dramatic intensity of individual scenes and passages. But it also has patches of interminable dullness, phoney rhetoric and sheer bathos. Whichever way you look at it, it is the kind of enormity which only genius can create. At this moment it is hard to see just what it is, so much does the grandiose dream merge into the reality of Hitler's Reich. I suppose it's unfair to blame Wagner for that; the man who strangles his wife can't shift the blame to Shakespeare for writing *Othello*. All the same, it is difficult in this case to see art objectively when life has imitated and perverted it on the most grotesque scale. For us at least, Brunnhilde bounces around like one of the Hitlermädchen, Wotan sounds like Goering in a rage, the Valkyrie seem to ride in on Heinkels with the cymbals bursting like bombs, and the wreckage of Valhalla suspiciously resembles the ruins of the Berlin Chancellery.

Living Legend

WHERE Hornblower represents the romance of the sea, and *The Cruel Sea* something like the harsh reality, *Cloud of Sail* (from 1YA and 1YC) a programme about the Cutty Sark, gave us a combination of both. The sailing ship, as it existed in the great days just before the coming of steam, was the end-product of a wonderfully complex craftsmanship, and the mere sight of those tall towers and spires of white canvas moving under the wind is enough to rouse what Herbert Read would call "the sense of glory." Yet the classics of sail—the books of Dana or Melville, for example—are enough to remind us that the great ships could be "heaven above and hell below," and that this unequalled grace was paid for both in heroism and in brutality. This lively

and absorbing programme had an equal eye to both sides of the picture—to the rivalry with the Thermopylae and the race with the steamship Britannia, and to the rigours of a disastrous voyage under a bucko mate. It showed how a strictly commercial proposition could also (in this case) be a living legend.

—M.K.J.

The Forerunners

BECAUSE New Zealand literature is not widely read one tends to think that there is even less of it than there is, an illusion dispelled by "The Novel in New Zealand," heard from 3YC. So far the first talks given by Joan Stevens have proved most informative and thought-provoking, partly because they dealt with early work and gave reasons for its comparative failure. Verne and Henty both passed this way in their work, leaving even less of a wake than their New Zealand contemporaries. This indicates that they, at least, did not fail because they had wanted to inform distant readers about New Zealand; or to show them how to succeed as Christian Pioneers. The question is whether the superficial motive which leads a man to write is really very important if he has the imaginative impulse and understanding. The record of the literal amount of gold taken from a mine in Bains's story might as easily have found a place in Balzac, Defoe or Hugo as in a New Zealand writer. The real problem is the intractability of real material; the literary past, too, is filled with the blackened stumps of burning and felling which precede the more pastoral era.

A Gap to be Filled

ALTHOUGH I have looked to *What's My Line?* to fill the gap left when *We Beg to Differ* ceased, it can hardly be said to fill the bill. It is entertaining but hardly has the same interest or stimulus. I set out to guess the occupation of the person questioned in the 3ZB session the other night, deliberately not listening to the audience's secret; but, as usual in all these kind of games, I can't bear to see my own pinhead I.Q. reflected in the fumbling guesses, so I suspect that my interest will now discreetly wane. At any rate, the panel discussion is by far the better form of entertainment and it is a pity that 3YA's "Well Informed Circle" discusses

GRAFTON BRIDGE

*SAY, lit by Lucifer,
To end it all,
He preferred the way of the meteor
To a glacial decline and fall;*

*Flung at the indifferent earth
His desperate boast
That the unknown odds are worth
The spin of an outworn ghost.*

*Uptown, the evening edition
Published, with thanks,
A protest by Mother of Ten
On vagrant suicides and cranks.*

*Downtown, a tired clerk
Consigned to its place
Among the ledgers of the dark
A judgment on the human race.*

*The crowd from Queen Street
Muttered at the rail;
The undertaker seized the Feet,
Spat, and drove his nail.*

—Colin Newbury