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28.5.7

RADIO REVIEW

Hephzibah and Friends

WHEN Hephzibah and her friends played Beethoven, two thousand heads and four thousand ears drew closer to the players and listening became as intimate as a family party. Hephzibah Menuhin's radiant personality illumines the platform, shines through the music and percolates, too, through the microphone. When she approaches the piano, quietly, unpretentiously, it seems unlikely that such an apparently fragile figure contains either physical or emotional strength sufficient to solve the technical problems that will arise, and at the same time meet the practised and polished Griller Quartet on equal terms in the field of interpretation. As it was, Hephzibah Menuhin matched the strings measure for measure and, in the Beethoven Piano Quartet in E Flat, as unassuming as always but not for one moment lacking poise, took the lead in what is essentially a pianist's work. The difficulties of the piano part in this quartet are irritating ones, because they are difficulties of awkwardness chiefly and not brilliance, and one feels, sometimes, that most of them ought not to be there. Hephzibah Menuhin made the music sound deceptively simple, and no hint of its perversities obtruded on the suavity of her playing. As light as a feather, as lithe, as strong and as firm as the spring of a watch, her playing made the music sound convincing at all times. The members of the Griller Quartet who had first met Hephzibah only a day or two before, seemed and played like old friends. Together they made the Beethoven, an immature and at times feckless work, sound like great music. When the Griller Quartet re-assembled complete with second violin to play Haydn, Op. 33, No. 3, the music of yesterday sounded like the music of the moment. One forgot the players in the effortless flow and spontaneity. Hephzibah Menuhin and the Griller Quartet were at the Wellington Town Hall. This, the Griller Quartet said, was the second largest audience they had ever had. With the music, the playing and the audience, it was a memorable occasion, and would have been any time, anywhere.

—O.J.

It, partly by taking it too fast. On the other hand, his reading of "Danny Deever" is in every way remarkable, and would deserve a high place in any anthology of spoken English verse.

The Missing Camera

THE programme on *The Sound Barrier* (from 1YA), while it cast several interesting sidelights on the film, missed out many things that made it memorable. The director, David Lean, explained how that striking opening—the diving Spitfire above the cliffs of Dover—came to be written into the script, and how the film originated in a desire to do something between the well-tried heroics of the war film and the fantasies of science-fiction. A year was spent in research, among aircraft designers and test pilots, before Terence Rattigan was called in to write the script; and this helped to explain the intensely contemporary feeling of the film—the first, as far as I know, to give us the sense of a strictly postwar world. But of the film's other virtue—the singular beauty of its aerial photography, surely some of the finest ever screened—nothing was said at all. The things one remembered from the film were (apart from the roaring whistle of jet engines) mainly visual—particularly the high-flying shots of the Alps and of clouds floating above the mirror of the Mediterranean. A few words from the camera crew would have been appreciated.

—M.K.J.

Tobacco Road

SMOKING is such a widespread custom, and seems so absolutely necessary to countless people, that one wonders how the western world lived before 1492. Were its nerves quietened then in other ways? Even the Nesta Pair production didn't answer this one for me, although it did plot the highway of nicotine through the blood stream. And, of course, for sheer enjoyment it would be hard to beat this programme (heard from 3YC), which began with a boy being strapped for smoking by a master who was just "dying" for a cigarette himself, recounted Mark Twain's assertion that it was easy to give up smoking (he had a thousand times), and ended with the smoker coughing his way through a justification of his pet vice. On the serious side statistics and research laid a great many superstitions and came out with one grave warning for heavy smokers of 45 or over, owing to the danger of contracting cancer of the lungs. I did not lay the ghost, though, of a seemingly inherited smoker's cough which viciously attacks me in the morning as soon as I begin gulping down the splendid winter air.

Three Elements of Radio

STATION 3YC's "Sounds, Words and Music," an attempt to explore the evocative power of the radio's three elements, was undoubtedly the most exciting programme of the week. One hopes that the NZBS will continue its experiment. Now to the difficulties. In "Manifest Destiny," the straight historical story, plus the metaphysical ideas which arose from it, pulled all the musical and sound effects down into the form. Here, a vast idea concerning man's place in the universe was apt to let the theme spread like a dusky marsh from which rose great rocky shapes of meaning. For such explorers there is the danger of using eerie sounds which, as in the case of the first talkies, threaten to exclude the range of exciting sounds

Variety of Kipling

TO some of us who had enjoyed Kipling since childhood, it was a very real pleasure to read that lucid and persuasive essay which T. S. Eliot, 12 years ago, prefaced to his selection of Kipling's verse. By disposing of irrelevant objections, and by his unerring selection of the verse itself, he opened the way to the current reappreciation of Kipling; and among other things, he pointed to the older poet's remarkable variety and control of form. The recordings read by Carleton Hobbs and Bernard Miles help to support this, even by a partial failure. Mr. Hobbs, for example, can get the right kind of strangeness into that haunting poem, "The Way Through the Woods." "The Dykes" goes flat; and yet "The Storm Cone" has power and weight behind it. With Mr. Miles the case is even clearer. "The Long Trail," with its subtle variations of pace, is a tricky poem; and it seems to me that Mr. Miles makes a mess of



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