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RADIO REVIEW

Knocking It Off

THE assault upon Everest is of even wider appeal than the Olympic Games, probably because it engages the attention of those who feel the mystical symbolism of great heights as well as those who are interested in the feat itself. I was therefore glad that my wife noticed the rearrangement of 3YA's programme to include an account of the Everest assault given by members of the team. One of the interesting and amusing sidelights to my listening came through the contrast in the voices and phraseology, reminding me of our national difficulty in accepting the "accent." To one member of the party it seemed "... impertinent, not to say fatuous, to try and climb the thing." When at 12,000 feet we sighted the Tibetan monastery and game sanctuary my memory was quickened, as I had been there myself years ago—with Rider Haggard. Then came the description of the great glacier with its eerie changing icescape and belly rumblings. If anything, as a programme, Hillary's triumph came as something of an under-statement in a typical British fashion, leaving one to wonder if it would have been better here to have supplied by outside narration the drama that was missing from the team's own modesty.

some sarcasm; but there can be nothing wrong, surely, with an attempt to reduce costs, and the effort may lead to the creation of a new and more exciting house design.
—Westcliff

A Good Week for Words

THE successful radio talk or discussion—neither form is as easy as is sometimes supposed—depends partly on hitting a mean between the formal and the formless. This week offered an unusual variety of programmes which showed, in various ways, how the spoken word can be handled on the air. In *Question Mark* on housing (1YA), Vernon Browne gave his speakers their heads, and the result must have rejoiced many home-builders by its forthrightness. And on the same evening (from 1YC) the Griller Quartet, interviewed by Dorothea Turner, were friendly and highly informative. The most recent of Harold Nicolson's talks on King George V (1YC) dealt with the King's constitutional functions, and was a good example of the kind of clarification which the highly practised hand can achieve. Thursday's *Arts Review* contained a brief and entertaining talk by Guy Warrack on film music, enough to make one wish that he would talk at greater length, and with detailed illustrations. As for the Everest programme (1ZB, Sunday), it just couldn't fail; it was crisply and unobtrusively edited, and the members of the expedition (not least our own George Lowe) did themselves considerable credit by their vivid and modest narration.

From the Scrapbook

ALTHOUGH not often settled down to any serious listening at 6.30 in the evening, there are times when I have realised that the radio is making a serious and worthwhile effort to claim my attention. In this way I came to listen to 3ZB's *Scrapbook*, a convenient news bulletin summarising some cultural or practical item. On one evening some time ago we heard of Christchurch's musical preparations for the Coronation; more recently Ngaio Marsh dealt with the University Drama Society's *Julius Caesar*; and the last *Scrapbook* session showed us over the Wilson and the Hemmond experimental houses which have tried to cut the cost of building. These have aroused much interest and

Knowing the Real Thing

AS the Griller Quartet (from Dunedin) brought the Schubert A Minor Quartet to its impeccable close, the applause of the packed audience burst out with singular warmth. It was impossible not to be impressed by this, for only an hour before we had heard the crowd in the Auckland Town Hall rise to Sir Edmund Hillary and Mr. George Lowe in an exactly similar way. I draw no significance from the fact that the mountaineers were in Auckland and the musicians in Dunedin; nor do we need to ask whether a single city could have produced two such ovations on the same night. The fact remained that two groups of people recognised two different kinds of superb achievement, and said so in

"I KNOW WHAT I THINK . . ."

MONTEVERDI'S CHURCH MUSIC

I AM usually rather sceptical of fashions in musical taste, and my approach to the programme of Monteverdi broadcast recently from 2YZ was conditioned accordingly; but at the end of half an hour of his church music superbly sung by the *Schola Veneziana*, I was a whole-hearted supporter. "Beatus Vir," a setting of Psalm 111 for six voices and orchestra, was a monument to Monteverdi's achievement in infusing the massive, slow-moving style of Palestrina with the rhythmic and harmonic subtleties of the secular madrigals, without sacrificing its essential dignity. Like Byrd, his English contemporary, Monteverdi combined a bold experimental outlook with a careful conservatism: his works for the church were not merely a watered-down version of Gesualdo's sensuous chromaticisms—he was too well rooted in the ecclesiastical tradition to depart completely from the style in which so much great church music had been written. The southern warmth and joyousness of these Psalm settings gave new life and a personal fervour to the musical part of liturgical worship: I feel Monteverdi and Guareschi's Don Camillo would have seen eye to eye over this matter! The music, however, must be allowed to speak for itself—its clarity, its fundamental simplicity and its greatness of conception provide the listener with an artistic experience that is unfortunately all too rare nowadays.

—S.M.R.

(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.)