

"A Moonlight Trip on the River"



*Theme Programme Prize
Goes This Week to
Wanganui Competitor.*



For the third week of the "Radio Record's" theme programme competition there has been a great increase in the number of entries, and the variety of subjects suggested ranges from gipsies and Gracie Fields to womanhood and "Mary." The half-guinea prize has been awarded to Miss C. L. Read, 1 Allison Street, Wanganui, for her suggestions for a "Moonlight Trip on the River."

MANY of those who submitted their ideas this week provided good foundations to work on. A common fault, however, was caused by the fact that broadcasters have to rely solely on the microphone as a medium of expression to their listeners, and the absence of sufficient "atmosphere" in the themes was a disadvantage. In some cases a little expansion of the entries would have explained the background noise effects and more precise continuity, which would have improved their efforts, but as it is necessary to judge the competition from the wording received, there was no course open but to eliminate those efforts which failed to picture some means of continuity which could be vividly and effectively interpreted to the listeners.

Another point which might well have been considered by competitors was that so many listeners nowadays have become so blasé that they look for novelty of some sort nearly every time they settle down to an evening's entertainment at their fireside. New ideas are not easy to discover, perhaps, and although many of the entries were along original lines, they usually fell short of theme programme requirements in one way or another.

The winning entry has the virtue, too, of being presentable by a party of studio artists, whereas most competitors relied entirely on recordings for their music. One entrant hit on the idea of having a programme of music arranged, with armchair criticism and discussion of the records as if there were two men sitting at home and playing a gramophone, with the microphone "eavesdropping" on their informal talk. Another suggested an hour of "Mary" recordings with some bits of history introducing the famous Marys of past centuries. But that would make all the Mollys and Annies jealous, wouldn't it? The suggestion of a programme on womanhood was well considered, but would in its present form be more suitable for special occasions only, such as the incidence of Mothers' Day.

Entertainment value must also be considered. Some of the entries would have made excellent foundations for a public lecture-recital, where the hearers were people who attended because they were interested in the subject. But for a public which includes those of many tastes, there is enough "specialised" stuff broadcast now, without adding an hour's programme dealing with some particular part of the world from a scenic point of view. We may safely leave that to lecturers.

The prize-winning entry is expressed as follows:—

Here is a flesh-and-blood programme which could be put on by a party of eight or more young people. The idea to be conveyed to listeners is a moonlight trip on a river on a motor-boat. Some equipment should be placed in the studio which would give the effect of the chug-chug of a motor-boat engine, and some means for making water noises.

At the beginning the announcer could suggest to listeners that they switch off the lights in their rooms to give the right atmosphere. Two or three members of the party must be able to play the banjo, ukulele or steel guitar, and one, if possible, to play the piano-accordion, and most of them should have good singing voices. Another member of the party should act as humourist, and often break in with anecdotes. Sometimes he could be allowed to have his say, and when he makes a joke he might sometimes be "ducked"—or threatened with a push overside.

A suggested sequence for events and effects is: Engine start, chatter, shrieks by girls, shouts by boys, settle down to the quiet, rhythmic beat of the engine. The humourist makes a joke and starts the ball rolling.

Duet on instruments; male voice solo with banjo accompaniment (this could be a recorded item); accordion solo, party joining in chorus; anecdotes, choruses by party, accompanied by one instrument; stop engine and let boat drift, quiet talk, and one of the girls could say a short, appropriate poem; start engine again; a few anecdotes and a solo played on a comb-and-paper by the humourist; a bit of cross-talk with the "captain" of the boat; more choruses, finishing up with "Auld Lang Syne." Good concerted items and banter could be added at will.

Miss Read's winning entry has pronounced entertainment possibilities, and others came nearly up to the same requirements. It is obvious that many of the competitors had a good understanding of the meaning of "theme programme," whereas others had apparently, to judge by their entries, never sat through an hour's theme programme from New Zealand stations.

Next week will be the last opportunity for entry in the "Radio Record" theme programme competition, and to be eligible the entries should have reached this office by Thursday, July 18, addressed to the Editor, "N.Z. Radio Record," Box 1680, Wellington, and the envelopes marked "Theme Programme."

