

THE Editor has asked me to keep an alert ear open to the Voice of Michael. "Michael" is my friend the microphone. Every night he gives me something of interest. Of music there is a plenty. And I like music in my own way, but of it the Lord knows I am no critic. I can detect "God Save the King" from "Onward, Christian Soldiers" principally by the fact that "God Save" comes at the end of most performances, while "Onward, Christian Soldiers" was firmly fixed in boyish memory by the rhythmic roarings of that tune by massed thousands at the Torrey-Alexander Mission. The music of Michael is therefore chiefly of interest as a pleasant background to my reading. By long immunity, engendered by concentration even above the clash of the linotype, I can read happily whether the brass bands are blaring or the cymbals tinkling, and only occasionally am I forced to avoid the penetrative sharpness of some super-excellent soprano, excellent in her field, I make no doubt, but disturbing to me personally. No, my function in these pages is not the harrowing of musicians. Let others do that. But the speechmakers, the talkers: they are to be my subject. Unable to read against the talking voice, I am compelled to listen. Listening, I criticise, and carrying that criticism into these columns I hope to interest listeners by genially cheering or jibing the talker, and recording the more important points of discourses of note. That is to be the spirit of this page.

I WAS agreeably pleased by the talk on South Africa on Wednesday evening last by Mr. E. J. Howard. In matter he was excellent, displaying a comprehensive knowledge which permitted an admirable pen picture of the State, its history, development and possibilities to be graven on the minds of listeners. Were I Pecksniffian in attitude, the paucity of final g's and the occasional complete absence of the initial "h" might be dwelt upon, but these omissions I cheerfully forgave because of a definitely attractive radio voice used in telling a story plainly holding the deepest interest for the lecturer. And that, I think, is the whole essence of success in the Voice of Michael. The lecturer is forced to rely only upon his voice: he is deprived of stage presence and dominance and the intimate contact with his audience. His voice alone is his emissary; how important therefore is the quality of that voice. And it is the capacity to convey the personality and interest of the speaker in what he is discoursing upon that accounts for the effect attained. The professorial or artificial tone is usually fatal. While I love pure English, the rounded phrase and the well-toned voice, I detest artificiality and affectation, and I loathe the quick-voiced, snappy jargon of many of our colonial speakers. Radio is ruthless in its revelation of them, and if my experience in the past is any guide to the future, I anticipate the need for some crisp reflections upon some radio speaking voices and manners. In that however, let there be no spleen or guile. I like the voice of Michael, and want his voice to be ever better and better; hence my mission. Meantime, congratulations to Mr. Howard; forgiven are minor verbal crudities for the sake of a live subject vividly handled. There is romance in Africa and a rare future

The VOICE of MICHAEL By "CRITIC"

awaits that dark continent. If he talks again I'll listen.

ON Tuesday night last I tuned in to 1YA and was entertained by a strong cast of players supporting a rather thin play. This is not infrequently the case. The leading role of Mrs. Cyrus K. Schnyler was extremely well portrayed by Mrs. Zoe Bartley-Baxter. It was the evident intention of the author that this character should be the modern conception of a fairy godmother. Leaving England at an early age, Aunt Daphne strikes oil (literally) on property purchased by her in the United States. She returns many years later in the guise of Mrs. Cyrus K. Schnyler, a name assumed for business purposes after her sudden enrichment. She stays (strictly incognito) at the home of her favourite nephew, Douglas Montalban, and his wife June. The former is a brilliant, albeit unsuccessful playwright. June is an equally brilliant and equally unsuccessful pianiste. Their lack of financial support does not preclude this happily married couple from retaining the services of the usual trusty servitor in the shape of a nurse-companion, by name Susan, and a little maid-of-all-work, Peggy. On this home of bliss, so nearly on the financial rocks, descends Aunt Daphne as Mrs. Cyrus K. Schnyler, introducing herself as a friend of their dear Aunt Daphne. Taking only the trusty Susan and a lawyer (Mr. White-

head) into her confidence, she proceeds to draw large cheques, and in the course of a very brief interview "persuades" Mr. Goldmeyer to produce one of Douglas's plays on very lucrative terms to the author. Her persuasive methods, coupled with shrewd business tactics, and backed by her omnipotent cheque book, are similarly successful in arranging a comprehensive concert tour for June. Nor do her benefactions cease at this point; learning that Peggy (the-maid-of-all-work) is possessed of a chronic invalid for a father, and several young sisters and brothers, she provides a handsome annuity for the family, coupled with a cash gift of sufficient size to make an immediate holiday in Cornwall possible. For services rendered and about to be rendered the worthy lawyer receives a gift-salary of £1250, "quite apart from and in addition to the usual fees arising out of the transaction of my present and future business." Mr. Whitehead is suitably overwhelmed. To make assurance doubly sure, Aunt Daphne deeds £1,000 a year each to Douglas and June, besides buying them a fully furnished country mansion. News of all their good fortune is delivered by post on the following morning. An ingenious "slip" in the secrecy plans of Aunt Daphne forces her to an early disclosure of her identity and the source of their overwhelming blessings. A touching scene of mutual affection and general goodwill closes a very harmless, if slightly bilious, play. The incidental music

was in keeping with the play theme—sweet and pretty. I was particularly glad to find that the motif underlying much of it was a canary and not the effect of my neighbour's set squealing! Deserving of particular reference in the execution of somewhat trying parts (in addition to the work of Mrs. Baxter, previously mentioned) are Mr. Jack Gordon as Douglas, Miss Muriel Fisher as Peggy, Mr. Walter Brown as Signor Giuseppe Lucielle (the impresario who is persuaded into arranging June's concert programme). But signal praise in a cast of such all-round quality is perhaps unnecessary. I look forward with enthusiasm toward hearing them again in a stronger play which will further extend their obvious talent.

AT the commencement of Mr. Holloway's talk on tar and its by-products broadcast from 1YA, my sincerest sympathies were with the speaker. For, said I to myself, how can he condense such a subject into the short space of time at his disposal? Particularly as Mr. Holloway courageously introduced us to tar's step-parent by chemistry—coal. But Mr. Holloway is a very capable man. Not only did he verbally conduct us through the intricacies of the extraction of coal tar, with short mention of various other of coal's by-products and uses, but, in addition, devoted quite twelve minutes to an able plea to "Buy New Zealand Goods." The firms who were singled out for special mention by Mr. Holloway must surely be gratified. But, with all due regard to the excellent and patriotic sentiments expressed, is this treatment of a scheduled subject quite fair? It does, after all, savour very much of "Wireless Advertising" which is (and very wisely) rigorously excluded by the Government in its agreement with the Radio Broadcasting Company. Mr. Holloway possesses a good delivery; he has the all too rare power of making a potentially dull subject very interesting indeed. I could have done with my full ration of twenty minutes on "Tar and Its By-products."

ON Thursday evening I tuned in to 3YA and listened to Mr. J. W. Humm talk on "Berry-bearing Plants." Coming on top of a good dinner, such a soporific all but proved fatal to the keeping of a later appointment. At first I was transported to the days of my early childhood, and had a mental vision of Jones minor following Smith major in an earnest but fruitless attempt to give some meaning to an English Primer. Then the unceasing low cadence gradually lulled me to the very borders of the land of nod. In all earnestness, let me beseech these gentlemen who are giving us of their valuable store of knowledge to try and put some spark of vitality into their lectures. Their items are advertised as "talks." Do let them be talks—read them, if that is necessary, but make such reading firstly word perfect and secondly possessed of some life. In both these qualities Mr. Humm's talk was sadly lacking; which, considering the undoubted excellence of his matter, was little short of a tragedy.

MY feminine counterpart reports that in a talk from 2YA, Mrs. T. W. Lewis spoke in an able and interesting manner on "Fabrics and Fashion," and the general trend of things sartorial. The speaker traced the historical sequence of the modes, giving sidelights and amusing comment on lightning diversities of fashion. At present, Mrs. Lewis said,



ALICE VINSEN,
a very frequent performer before the Christchurch microphone. She will present contralto solos on April 30.

—Claude Bins, photo.



AILEEN WARREN,
an accomplished 3YA pianiste and member of the Broadcasting Trio, a combination which is much appreciated by listeners.

—Stefano Webb, photo.