

Here and There

A Review of this week's Programmes

By

"TRIPLE GRID"

"Wurzell Flummery." A. A. Milne's one-act play, "Wurzell Flummery," which will be broadcast from 1YA on Monday next, would hardly have been written but for the War. A "Punch" writer, Milne found the usual avocations of young subalterns not to his taste, and as a way of amusing himself took to writing plays. "So we began with 'Wurzell Flummery,'" he admits. "She wrote, I dictated. We did not estimate money or publicity but, of course, secretly hoped it might be so. When we became tired of it we took long walks together." "Wurzell Flummery" was first produced by Dion Bencicault at the New Theatre, London, in April, 1917. It is pure "Punch," pure A. A. Milne; a light farce, unspoiled by gravity or rancour. The point of the story is that Crawshaw, to inherit a fortune left by his uncle, must change his name to Wurzell Flummery, "probably the maiden name of his grandmother or someone like that."

Katherine Mansfield. The fairies showered gifts into Katherine Mansfield's cradle, about whom a talk will be broadcast from 3YA on Monday, and a storm of applause and eulogy still surges around the name of this gifted woman, who proudly is acclaimed in the country to which she belonged, and upon the literary history of which she shed such distinction. Dogged by weakness, pursued by gathering shadows, she yet left a legacy of lambent fancy and crystalline prose and verse that render her immortal. With many of us the medium of language is a poor and clumsy vehicle with which to convey impressions of life's great spectacle, and we are spellbound by the range of vision possessed by this New Zealand-born girl, her superhuman powers of observation and analytical dissection of man's frailty, as exemplified in her brilliant stories. Perhaps her letters, written in a far country, hold greatest appeal of all, so human are they, so poignant and enthralling. Catching at beauty with both hands, the stars in the heavens irradiated her wistful journey, a weeping child by the wayside spelled tragedy, and every branch against the evening sky and red rose on a ruined wall held a message. Nobly courageous, magnificently gifted, Katherine Mansfield has left a very goodly heritage to the English people.

Don Cossacks. Records of Don Cossack's Choir are fairly well known to gramophone and radio enthusiasts, and it is nothing out of the ordinary that a recording of that famous combination is to be broadcast from 3YA on Monday next. The Cossack, that glamorous figure that has been dominant in Russian history over the centuries, is a sorry picture to-day. Like so many characteristic figures of the Russian empire, he has been absorbed into Sovietism and is disappearing. Go to a Cossack village to-day and you witness the sorry spectacle of the brutal law administrator of the empire. You see them in groups, no longer in their colourful uniforms, no longer practising sword thrusts from their well-trained and fiery mounts, but just idling or painfully tilling the land that the Government has allotted them. Their steeds, like their independence, have been lost to the State, and their arms—well, ask any group to produce a sabre and it is doubtful if any member could muster up even the faintest resemblance of what was once the possession of every Cossack. The Cossack has, alas, gone forever.

Boys in Town. The "Boys in Town" are to give a concert from 4YA on Monday next. I wonder what pranks they will get up to. You know, the town boys of to-day are not a bit like the boys of your day and mine. You remember the pranks in election night, for instance, when there was no wireless to keep everyone sitting over the fire. Everyone used to come to town to see the numbers go up. Of course, they had horses then, and things were different. In our town the youths—yes, I was one of them—was particularly wild, and when horses and buggies were left while owners crowded round the post office and talked about the effect of the election on butterfat prices, we were at work among the horses. Old Mack's buggy was harnessed to the grey mare through the fence, the wheels from Ted Walling's gig were hidden under the church, the britching-straps from someone else's harness were cut almost to the last thread, and Bill Jones, who had left his steed in the stable, found it somehow in the hayloft. Yes—boys were boys then.

HIGH SPOTS IN THIS WEEK'S PROGRAMMES

Wurzel Flummery.
1YA, Monday.

Christmas Optimism.
2YA and 2ZD, Tuesday.

Aeolian Orchestra
1YA, Thursday.

Royal Choral Union
2YA, Thursday.

Cecelia Singers
4YA, Thursday.

Old-Time Dance Music
1YA, Saturday.

THE TALKS

The English Cricket Team in Australia.
1YA, Thursday.

Mata Hari
2YA, Thursday.

"Te Kooti"
4YA, Thursday.

"Dougal—A Dog Story"
1YA, Friday.

"The Breadlines of New York"
4YA, Friday.

Optimism. Christmas optimism from 2YA on Tuesday sounds good. Without doubt, the depression has been made worse by calamity howling. No, I am not overlooking the fact that there are more out of work than ever, or that the prices of primary products show little improvement, but I do say that a lot of it is psychological. The wan look you see on people's faces and the mournful tales you hear about the times is more often a result of worrying about the depression than of the depression itself. Of course, better times will come, money will begin to flow, and the unemployed figures will begin to diminish. The rusted wheels of industry will begin to turn over again, and it will be forgotten that there was ever a depression. What is lacking to-day is optimism—or shall we say factism? People are not facing the facts—they are either blindly ignorant of the plight of the other fellow and are not doing their bit to help things along, or they are calamity howling, and like the uncivilised natives are throwing dust about their heads and beating the air because something has gone wrong. No. This is a time when confidence is needed, and it is those with confidence who will come through.

Paul Whiteman. It is marvellous what a man will do for the woman of his heart. Gene Tunney took up professional boxing to get money, and now, stranger still, Paul Whiteman (whose records are frequently broadcast) has reduced 100 pounds for the woman who is now his wife. Once a man of tremendous bulk, the famous Whiteman was the butt of columnists' quips and the caricaturist's delight. They even predicted that the next event of major world achievement would be a non-stop flight round Paul Whiteman. But Whiteman began to extend his conducting business, and wanted to apply his ability to a home, but to his proposals of marriage accompanying the dozens of roses he sent each day, she invariably made the same reply, "Reduce if you'd seduce, weigh in if you'd stay in, make the count or take the count." So Paul saw his doctor, went on a diet—not a painful one, either—lost a hundred pounds, and married. But it was expensive, he admits, for besides 400 dollars for his doctor, a complete new wardrobe was needed. Everything has changed except his infectious smile, his innate good humour, and the vigour and spell that was and still is his personality.

Old-time Numbers. Many old-time numbers are broadcast these days, and there is talk of a return to old-time dancing. I am not surprised. Broadcasting is responsible, for with the large number of records and items now going over the air, it is utterly impossible to write new numbers fast enough, so the old have been resuscitated, given a coat of paint, and re-issued. And when the old numbers come back it is only natural that the steps that were danced to them should come back also. But I think we can go even farther than the dances and the records. I think we can go right to the people of to-day, the younger generation—the generation that has not known war. They are different somehow. There is a different code; they are more serious, and have a truer appreciation of values than those who were morally unstrung by the war. They are Victorians who have been given a coat of paint—they are the youth of 1932, and I have a lot of faith in them. Now is radio not a little to blame for this return either?

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