

# Spotlight on Radio Drama

VAL GIELGUD writes about plays to be broadcast this week and next

## 'The Day of Glory'

AT the risk of appearing arrogantly positive, and with all due appreciation of the alternative attractions of a Command Variety Performance, I should like to assert, to all listeners interested in plays and acting, that *The Day of Glory* is a piece not to be missed. In my opinion, for what it is worth, it is the best play dealing with a war subject that I have read, and I cannot understand why it has not already been snapped up by a London management. It is not a play of action—not a single shot is heard in the course of it. It is written with an understanding touched by irony, with sensitivity, with pity. Belle Chrystall and Gladys Young, Leslie Banks and Julian Dallas will bring to its service some of the best combined talents of the theatre and the microphone. I shall be very much surprised if Sq.-Ldr. Bates does not surpass, as a dramatist, his already established reputation as a novelist and short-story writer.

## Short Stories by Somerset Maugham

IN *Wednesday Matinée* on November 7 and late in the evening of Friday, November 16, admirers of Somerset Maugham's short stories can hear two of these adapted for broadcasting—*The Outstation* and *Before the Party*. As a matter of mere historical interest, *Before the Party* was the first of Somerset Maugham's stories to be adapted for broadcasting—and I produced it at Savoy Hill in 1929. Few writers have proved so fruitful in

short stories suitable for microphone adaptation as Mr. Maugham. It may be that the unrivalled dramatic sense which stands out in his plays is by no means absent from the craft of his story telling; it may be that his dialogue is always that of the born dramatist, that it needs neither trimming nor embellishment to become eminently speakable by actors. But from the *Ashenden* stories to the remarkable *Mildred Rogers*, which may be remembered for an outstanding performance by Miss Pamela Brown, Mr. Maugham's peculiar combination of irony and dramatic intensity have proved themselves in a field for which, unfortunately, he has never yet written directly. Miss Valerie White, who has made such a success in *No Medals* at the Vaudeville, will play the lead under Felix Felton's direction.

## 'Spanish Gold'

THERE is a fairly frequent tendency on the part of some listeners to reproach radio drama for its tendency towards the morbid, the criminal, and the horrifying. *Appointment with Fear*, the plays of Chekhov, and *Corner in Crime* certainly need to be balanced by equivalents in lighter and more comic vein. Unfortunately, the finding of good, amusing material is the far more difficult task of the two. Nearly all farce is ruled out owing to its predominantly visual qualities, and experience has shown that even such an acknowledged comedy writer as Anstey can prove singularly unfunny in

terms of broadcasting. George A. Birmingham, however, can, I think, be counted upon as a 'certain tip.' Best known, perhaps, for his *General John Regan*, his novel, *Spanish Gold* must have delighted thousands of readers. Mr. O'Donovan, who can be counted upon to get the best out of any play that deals with his native Ireland, is producing J. L. Galloway's adaptation of *Spanish Gold* on Monday, November 12, with James McKechnie as the charming, irrepressible Meldon.

## Saturday-Night Theatre

THE series of plays which are broadcast in the *Saturday-Night Theatre* series was recently defined, in my view, with uncanny precision as 'plays which we know to be popular and hope will be good.' On November 10 and 17 respectively, the large and faithful audience for this series can look forward to plays by, respectively, J. B. Priestley and J. M. Barrie—*Dangerous Corner* and *Quality Street*. *Dangerous Corner* will always be remembered as the play which established Mr. Priestley's reputation as a dramatist at a stroke by its brilliant originality both of theme and of construction. *Quality Street* has for years been a first favourite with those to whom Barrie's charm, sentiment, and technical dramatic brilliance are dear.

Footnote: Without apology I should like to draw the attention of those people who have a prejudice against poetry on the ground that it is 'highbrow,' to the series edited by Patric Dickinson under the title *Time for Verse* on Sunday evenings at 10.38. I believe it will prove unexpectedly attractive for listeners of any height of brow who will make an effort and take the plunge!