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10/4

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

"Winter Journey"

THE series of song-cycles from 2YA ended with Schubert's "Winter Journey," a set of 24 songs, described recently by the music critic of a daily paper as "rather doleful in character." They were sung in two broadcasts by Ken Macaulay, and very well sung indeed. The first song, "Goodnight," with its relentless marching tread, was a fine opening. And had the microphone not failed we might have heard the last song, "The Hurdy Gurdy Man," sung with profound feeling, and tremendously pathetic effect, as Mr. Macaulay has recently sung it, away from the microphone. In between, Mr. Macaulay found out the magic of those several songs which stand out on their own, and are for that reason so tempting to sing apart from the cycle. (One could call them the ones that have major-key episodes of brightness and hopefulness within a melancholy minor-key context.) And he showed us the difference between mock-moaning and true grief, in those others, the ones that are "rather doleful in character."

Onward!

I WAS disappointed with the last broadcast by the Dunedin R.S.A. Choir. I don't mean the standard of performance, since this has always been as high as is possible, considering that membership has, in the unique circumstances of the choir's formation, been restricted to veterans of 1914-18. Now that the stalwart original voices may be expected to be reinforced by younger and fresher choir members returning from the present war, the standard will naturally improve and the choir progress from strength to strength. But how welcome would be an improvement in the standard of the music sung. The recent broadcast, for example, included such hackneyed offerings as "On the Road to Mandalay," "Excelsior," and "Smilin' Through." Beethoven's "Hallelujah Power and Glory" was indeed the only item of any musical worth, and the inclusion of it proved that the choir is wasting its time on the sort of stuff that made up the rest of the programme. False modesty is not necessary here; there is no need to select banal items for fear that anything more worth while will present too tough a problem.

One Wonders Why

THERE seems to be a conspiracy, shall we say of the Fates, to exasperate those listeners who depend on Station 2YC for a good proportion of their music. The correspondents have had their say on the Parliamentary question, but that is not the end of the matter. When Brahms' Liebeslieder waltzes were scheduled for a Sunday evening at 9.0, I looked forward to hearing a work I have never seen in the programmes before (an interesting work, for two pianos and voices ad lib). But at 8.0 p.m. 2YC wished "to take this opportunity of advising listeners" that the play "The Silence of the Sea" would be heard at 9.0 p.m. This was the first intimation I had. The play (an excellent one) had been heard from that station at that time only three weeks before. If it was a

repetition in response to popular clamour, the purpose would have been better served by scheduling the play in the programmes in the ordinary way. As it is, probably very few of those who missed it the first time knew of this second broadcast. It is to be hoped that when the Liebeslieder waltzes are finally broadcast we will be given fair warning.

. . . And a Bottle of Rum

AFTER noticing a *Listener* portrait of Oscar Natzke with a highly nautical-looking beard, I heard him the other morning singing Masfield's "Captain Stratton's Fancy" ("says the old bold mate of 'Entry Morgan"). The result was reflections on the odd career of piracy



in English song and story. It began, I suppose, with the eighteenth century; most of the pirates of fact having been safely hanged by 1700, such works as the *Newgate Calendar* and *The Lives and Histories of the Most Notorious Highwaymen*—those fascinating if unreliable precursors of the "thud and blunder" story—went freely ahead, incorporating Teach, Kidd, and Mayhew into their rogues' galleries with the maximum of colourful and invigorating detail. Thus, partly because of their prestige as a sort of bar sinister on the more respectable sagas of Hawkins, Drake, and Grenville, and partly because of the natural charm of a hearty and unreal villain, they were received to the bosom of popular legend, generally of a juvenile nature. Tom Sawyer and his henchmen bear witness to their popularity in America of the 1830's; but it was 50 years later that the genius of Stevenson achieved perfection in this art-form. After *Treasure Island* there was clearly nothing left but imitation; and ever since authors of pirate stories have been taking up squatter's rights on the Dead Man's Chest in their myriads, even unto such a poor-lace-collared phantom as Captain Blood—while Barrie turned them half into fairies. And everyone is fully aware that the original buccaneers were a set of seagoing Scarfaces for the most part, and those lovingly described autos-da-fe at Execution Dock as unromantic as they were justified.

He Liked What He Knew

WHAT are the musical tastes of a freezing works employee? "Your Tiny Hand Is Frozen," Schubert's "Winter Journey," "Excelsior," or "Summer Is