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13-4

# RADIO VIEWSREEL

## What Our Commentators Say

### Melodious Birds

THE series "English Music Since the

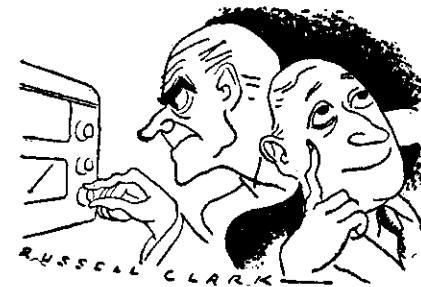
Elizabethans" got away to a fair start at 2YA notwithstanding the fact that the first programme was obviously improvised, and was, as it were, pre-natal, since it dealt with the Elizabethans themselves. Those inimitable musical antiquarians Ronald and Zillah Castle couldn't come, and in their stead we had BBC recordings of Byrd, Dowland, and Farnaby arranged for strings. Then some of those invaluable people who are evidently nonentities without names of any sort but sing very well just the same did some three-part songs by Wilbye and Henry Youll. Another that was announced was evidently done for their own amusement only since when it was due to start we had a record of something else. But the tenor and contralto were heard to advantage, as the dailies say, in two solo airs by Pilkington and Dowland, sung with feeling and distinction. The whole was bound together by some semi-well-informed remarks by the announcer about the men who wrote the music. But whoever gave him that sentence about the distinction between canzonets and madrigals "of which we can be but dimly aware" should be writing corsetry advertisements, not radio scripts. For all that the programme was worth while. It gave you some idea of the musical culture of the Elizabethans, who were, as Marlowe put it, "melodious birds."

been 30 years Head of the School?"

"That's right." "And in that time you have not altered the school curriculum one iota?" "That's right!" says Dr. Muffin, triumphantly sure of a rise in salary (of course he doesn't get it—he never does). With this solemn warning before them, it may seem strange that there are people in our midst who still admire the Dr. Muffins, and would prefer all teachers to adhere to the What-was-good-enough-for-Me theory of education. But possibly such people don't listen to the radio, and so do not know that their pedagogic ideal is so out-moded that it has now become a fit subject for light, if mordant, humour.

### At the Town Hall

THE public response in Auckland to a Grand Orchestral Concert was an unpredictable thing after all these years. We know now that the Town Hall will not be filled to the side walls for the type of programme that was offered by the NBS on November 3. The question is, will it take something higher or lower to lure tired people long distances from radio and chimney corner, and to drag the shillings from their pockets? We habitual radio listeners do not readily surrender our power of veto. If we do not like long operatic arias, Indian



### Ne Swike Thu Naver Nu

SOME years ago Mrs. Grigg (as she then was) asked in Parliament why it was that for the purposes of winter milk prices, the length of the winter was fixed at six months for Auckland, four months for Wellington and Christchurch, and only three for Dunedin. I do not remember what the answer was, except that it had nothing to do with weather. And probably the Weather Office has had no hand in advising that the Winter Course Talks should end at the beginning of October in Christchurch, later in the month in Dunedin and Wellington, but not until November in Auckland. This, from Auckland, is not a complaint. If there is any wintry relic that will still be welcome in November it is these talks. Indeed I look forward to the day when they will take another name, and when the coming of summer will be no excuse for wrapping them up and putting them away with moth-balls.

### Will Hay

THE character of Dr. Muffin, as embodied on the radio in the person of Will Hay, is something so shudderingly familiar that it seems to demand an awed gasp from the listener, rather than a chuckle. The threadbare, gaunt figure of the antique pedagogue, hiding a lack of qualifications under a mask of plausible effrontery, and quicker to use his cane than his brain, is such an epitome of the popular idea of a schoolmaster that it might well rank with Chaplin's little man in being at the same time pathetic, humorous, and something in the nature of a critical comment and warning. "Tell me, Dr. Muffin," enquires the dread Board of Governors, "you have

love calls and other such scraps mixed with our symphonic music, we may prefer to stay home and switch off at these points, unless the orchestral music is of very tempting splendour. At this concert it was not, and a good rich symphony by Brahms or Beethoven might have increased the size and warmth of the audience. In the one major offering of the evening, the *Symphonie Espagnole*, the aesthetic interests of the visible audience seemed to have been considered less than those of the invisible. With the soloist directly under the microphone, somewhat hedged in by the other strings, and the brass poised in high splendour just under the organ, the dress circle had no idea, until it reached home and consulted armchair listeners, that the balance had been in any way good.

\* \* \*

It is because, in my optimism, I see the visit of the NBS orchestra as no isolated event, but rather the beginning of new musical habits, that I offer the foregoing criticism which might otherwise sound ungrateful. In the last few years radio and gramophone have made known the best symphonic music to a large audience. These people have been quietly educating themselves at home to good purpose and they know what they like. The situation bears no comparison with the one that confronted Sir Henry

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