

reason for all this is that the specifically and consciously English music of the early 20th Century tended to be dominated over-much by visions of revived folk-song. Furthermore, the mind of the time had for some reason to go back to the Elizabethan or Middle Ages and the pre-industrial, pre-capitalistic civilisation for the sort of direct sensuous appreciation of urban life which inspired such poetry as that of the 14th-Century Dunbar: "London thou art of townes A purse . . . of most delectable lusty ladies bright . . . O towne of townes! patronne and not compare. London, thou art the flower of cities all." But there is another London tradition, of no inferior antiquity, which one would like to have incorporated in some London music—the lineage which holds the Newgate Calendar and Sweeney Todd, Dickens and Sherlock Holmes, and all the ugly humorous energy called Cockney. We might still, however, have need of the lavender.

Baksheesh, Baksheesh

THE music of Albert W. Ketelbey was a recent 3YL feature. Ketelbey of the Persian Market and the Chinese Temple and Monastery Gardens, was essentially an exponent, with Hermann Lohr and Teresa del Riego and worse, of the drawing-room ballad tradition—to which cruel decision a quarter-hour of his music forced the listener to accede. It is not without its pleasures, possibly even its merits, but an unfaltering fruitiness and gelatinous tremulosity pervades all. One realises that the more distressing varieties of mournfully amorous songs of our own day have their pedigree. Nevertheless the drawing-room ditty had two marked advantages. When it had words, the words had meaning—frequently disastrously lacking in merit and recalling translations of the classics made by Victorian statesmen and spinsters, spraying "thou" and "thy" about



the page—but the translations they resembled were made from a definite body of literature by persons nurtured, however incompletely, in a definite educational tradition. The gelatine was shaped in a known mould. A later day has achieved almost pure meaninglessness, the words being no more than formulae referring to one and a-half, and one and a-half only, of the numberless gamut of emotions known to man. Second, the Victorian style lent itself admirably to affectionate caricature. To hear an oldster, familiar with the pure drawing-room-music-hall manner of tear-jerking, sing "A Beautiful Picture in a Beautiful Golden Frame" or even "A

Bird in a Gilded Cage" is an experience of real if ridiculous charm. Not so Ketelbey, I fear; his career extended into the early days of the cinema, and composing for theatre orchestras did something to him.

Mountaineering Holiday

DORIAN SAKER'S series of talks, *Mountaineering Holiday*, revealed him as the possessor of a good microphone technique. His voice is quiet and pleasant, his manner intimate yet not familiar, and his tone suggests enthusiasm without the heartiness so jarring to the early morning listener. Mr. Saker



must have felt some incongruity in recalling his experiences with nature in her ruder aspects in a man-made studio whose sound-proof and windowless walls are deliberately built to exclude nature, but he seems as much at home in a

studio as on a shingle slide. But surely 10.25 a.m. is an odd time to choose for these talks? Then the only listeners are the retired, the sick, and the indolent—stony ground if Mr. Saker has any proselytising purpose, and the pukka climber in embryo is at this time at desk or workbench earning the money to buy his ice-axe, crampons, scroggin, and other items Mr. Saker lists as necessary to the Compleat Climber.

Ballad and Feud

THE Martins and the Coys, whose Kilkenny vendetta provides the theme of one of the better songs of that rather self-consciously old-time variety called hill-billy, were, as was recently unearthed, historical realities; and their saga is more or less accurate, since the last survivors were found to have intermarried. They recall to us one of the most interesting by-products of the settlement of America—the existence of the "mountain people"—communities scattered through half a dozen states, which still live apart from civilisation, leading a life closely approximating to that of the original 17th-18th Century settlers. Nothing quite like this occurs elsewhere in the overseas expansion of the English-speaking peoples—not even, says a cynical acquaintance, on the West Coast of the South Island—and emigration as often leads to a loss of traditional customs. However this may be, the mountain communities provide a living witness of what the old folk-song was, in the days before commercial entertainment. I do not quite know why one should like it better; it repeats stereotyped patterns; originality is not its long suit—but some fair proportion of its fascination for us rests in its presentation of a simpler and more direct culture, which seems the less burdensome for being the more remote. And yet, when all is said, these half-primitive villagers, in whose community few would really want to live, possess a secret of spontaneity of song which modern entertainment methods have driven underground to exist precariously among soldiers, students, and other amateurs of the unpublished.

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