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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Lady Hester Stanhope

LADY HESTER STANHOPE is the latest addition to the gallery of English Eccentrics, heard from 2YA on Friday nights, and having heard her story presented in succinct, dramatic form, shorn of the untidiness of eccentricity while preserving the dramatic appeal of the state, one is tempted to wonder whether Lady Hester's method did not outweigh her madness. But it would be out of place to launch into a discussion of what constitutes eccentricity, for this was dealt with fully in the first talk of the series. It was probably eccentric of Lady Hester to believe the prophesy that she would ride into Jerusalem beside the Messiah and be crowned Queen of the Jews; it was eccentric of her to maintain an elaborate system of spies to keep her informed of European intrigues while she shivered in a torn pelisse amid mouldering furniture. But assuming it was power and fame she prized, the poverty and loneliness of her life's end was a small price to pay for the knowledge that the peoples of her Lebanon domain quaked at her name, and that even when she was dying the Egyptian Viceroy did not dare to violate her tiny kingdom. Had she not been "eccentric" she might have ended her days as miserably in the retirement of an English watering-place, fit subject for the pen of the young Dickens. But as Joan Haslip puts it her eccentricity gained her lasting fame not only as the last of the 18th Century eccentrics but as the first of the 19th Century pioneers.

hassocks and long Sunday mornings punctuated with those four-square dirges known as congregational hymns, rather than the inspired religious music of the great masters. I imagine it has been used to describe these concerts merely for lack of a better, more pliable adjective, nor can I suggest a better alterna-



tive. Actually, the programme contained items from the oratorio, cantata, mass, and general worship, and J. T. Leech, the conductor, even went so far as to allow the shade of Asgard momentarily to overshadow the stained-glass, when the Choir resoundingly presented "The Challenge of Thor" from Elgar's *King Olaf*. When last I wrote of these concerts, I mentioned that I should have liked some Palestrina and Bach. Well, they were both represented in this concert, but I have not heard either yet, since they both came in the second half of the concert, and the broadcast stopped at nine o'clock. Perhaps Palestrina's "Like as the Hart Desireth" for the benefit of radio listeners may figure in some later broadcast by this choir?

Those Foreign Accents

BY accident I tuned in to one of the most hectic plays it has ever been my misfortune to hear. It came from a Dunedin station and was all about the Nazi occupation of France. All the people in it were either German or French, and among themselves we may imagine them speaking only French and German; this, in order that we may understand the story, must necessarily be written for us in English—but why must the performers in such cases choose to speak such abominably foreign-accented English in unspeakably guttural or nasal tones? If it is presumed that two Frenchmen speak good average French to each other, cannot this be translated as good average English? If we must provide a foreign character with an accent to indicate his nationality, let it be slight enough not to obscure our quick appreciation of the dialogue. The play I heard was so thickly overburdened with accents in every case that it was a constant strain on the listening ear. It was all about a Nazi official known as the Mad Butcher of Paris, whom the characters referred to as "zee mahd bootcheurr" and his unmasking at the hands of the Underground, who tricked him into self-revelation in a manner which would scarcely have succeeded if tried on a real Nazi official, even a minor one of

Lili Kraus in Dunedin

HAVING exhausted my adjectives on various performers and composers in the course of writing these notes, I now find to my chagrin that I have no words left for the playing of Lili Kraus. Perhaps that is just as well, since she is so different from anyone else we have heard that it requires a newly-minted word-coinage to put her personality on paper. Radio listeners who failed to attend her personal appearances in Dunedin know only one aspect of this versatile artist, as anyone will testify who has seen as well as heard her when she is playing. As far as the 4YA studio broadcasts were concerned, for me the highlights were the Bach and Mozart, played with such beauty of tone, clarity of notation and subtlety of phrasing and nuance as to leave one with an entirely new conception of the works. What we have most to thank Lili Kraus for is her introduction of Mozart as a living, breathing composer, instead of the museum-piece he appears as performed by most pianists. She has demonstrated also that a programme can be intensely exciting without being overloaded with compositions from the Romantic period, and that those programmes are not necessarily lacking in an essential element if Chopin's works are omitted (for this relief, much thanks!).

Ecclesiastical Music

THE Dunedin Lyric Choir's concert of Ecclesiastical Music has become an established function, and the latest 4YA broadcast of such concerts was interesting and varied. "Ecclesiastical" is a word with somewhat stiff-sounding connotations, reminding one rather of dusty