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P.7

FORM IN MUSIC

TODAY we begin a series of brief articles by BESSIE POLLARD, Mus. Bac., on "Form in Music." These will be closely related to a series of programmes on the same topic beginning at 2YC on Friday, September 5. Each of our articles will have as illustration a few bars of the type of music being discussed.

1 The Canon

WHEN we come into contact with musical works of whatever period, we hear such terms as fugue, canon, suite, symphony, and so on, and not all of these are fully understood by the layman. That is the reason for this series of articles and programmes.

For instance, canon and fugue are commonly thought the most rigid and repellent of all the musical forms. In fact, the canon should be regarded as the most democratic of them all, for it accommodates itself to any gathering. Examples in canonic form range from a humorous triviality like "Three Blind Mice" to the exalted "Qui Tollis" from Bach's *Mass in B Minor*.

A canon is a composition in which all the voices (or parts) have the same melody, but each part begins at a dif-

ferent moment, creating a sort of "staggered" effect. The whole composition is said to be "in imitation," because each voice repeats (or "imitates") the same melody. Depending upon the size of the interval at which one voice imitates another the canon is said to be "at the unison"; "at the second"; "at the fourth"; and so on.

Now think of "Three Blind Mice"—an example of a circular canon at the unison—familiarily known as a "round." Do you recollect how it goes? The first singer begins singing the tune alone; at the third bar the second singer joins in; at the fifth bar the third singer enters, and so on. As each singer finishes the tune he goes back to the beginning, and the performance continues until the singers decide to stop.

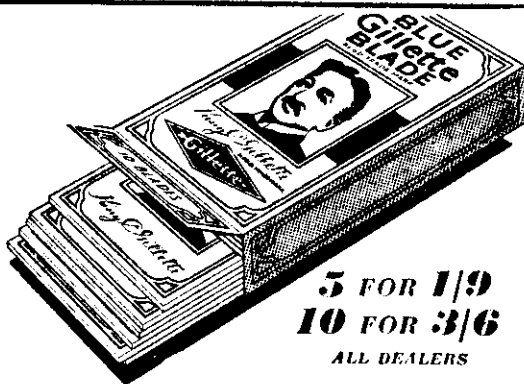
The first extant canon (from the Middle Ages) is known as the "Reading Rota"—"Sumer is icumen in"—written

J. S. Bach: "Goldberg" Variations.



Var. 6: Canon at the Second.

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11.7A

'Good Mornings' begin with Gillette

by John of Fornssete, a monk of Reading Abbey. A very engaging piece of music, for six voices, with an almost folk-dance flavour, it is not a mere museum specimen by any means.

A canon may be either for voices or instruments, or for both; it may be complete in itself or it may form a section of, or even a whole movement of a larger work. J. S. Bach raised the form to its highest peak of achievement. In his "Goldberg Variations" for harpsichord he cast every third variation in the form of a canon, ranging in interval from the unison to the ninth. Mozart and Beethoven, too, were predisposed to the form.

In England during the 17th and 18th Centuries, another sort of round known as the "catch" became very popular. Henry Purcell wrote many of them, some showing the dominating Restoration relish for rather coarse humour. Earlier references by Shakespeare and other contemporary writers to "ale-house" catches show that this type of entertainment was often held in dispute.

But after all doesn't this prove our original contention that the canon is at home in all kinds of society?

CANON—the first of a series entitled "FORM IN MUSIC"—will be heard at 9.30 p.m. from Station 2YC on Friday, September 5.