

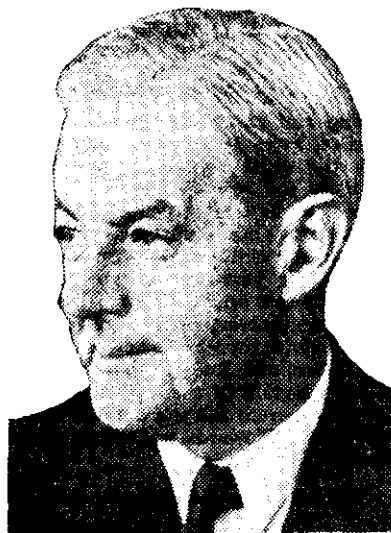
HE COULD WHISTLE, TOO

Personal Memories Of Sir Hamilton Harty

HAPPY personal memories of the English conductor, Sir Hamilton Harty, who died recently, were recalled by Andersen Tyrer, conductor of the NBS String Orchestra, in an interview with *The Listener*. In fact Sir Hamilton Harty was best man at Andersen Tyrer's wedding, and they lived close to one another from about 1920 to 1937.

Andersen Tyrer first met Harty during the war. He was then Lieutenant Harty, R.N.R., employed as a listener in a submarine because of his acute powers of hearing, and released occasionally to be guest conductor for the London Symphony Orchestra Sunday afternoon concerts in the London Palladium, with Lieutenant Tyrer of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers as solo pianist. After the war, their friendship continued, and Hamilton Harty conducted the London Symphony for four concerts that Andersen Tyrer gave in the Queen's Hall.

Hamilton Harty began his career, however, as an accompanist. He felt that his medium was the orchestra, but experienced tremendous difficulty in being recognised in those far-off days early in the century when only conductors with foreign names secured the big appointments. Perhaps an opening might be secured, he thought, if he gained fame as a composer, so he composed his tone poem "With the Wild Geese," and through that secured the opportunity of conducting with his own work. This led to his appointment as permanent con-



SIR HAMILTON HARTY

ductor of the Leeds Symphony Orchestra, just about the time that Sir Thomas Beecham presented his famous Promenade Concerts in Manchester. In fact, that orchestra was formed by Hamilton Harty for Sir Thomas, and gave concerts nightly in the Queen's Theatre, with Hamilton Harty as occasional guest conductor.

This in turn led to the appointment with which he will always be associated, and for which, indeed, he was knighted—his contribution to music through his long and brilliant conductorship of the famous Halle Orchestra.

The Halle Orchestra had had a long career under Michael Balling (remembered by some New Zealanders as a former Director of the School of Music at Nelson), and when Balling returned to Germany, the Halle was carried on by Sir Thomas Beecham as chief conductor and musical director, but with the system of guest conductors. One of these was the young Hamilton Harty, who, when his genius was recognised, was recommended for the permanent conductorship, and made the Halle into the most dynamic orchestra in England.

Of recent years, Sir Hamilton Harty had been away from conducting through illness and the loss of an eye, but a letter received by Andersen Tyrer recently indicated that he had intended to start work again with the new concert season.

One of the most amusing stories told of Sir Hamilton is of his skill as a whistler. When any member of his orchestra had difficulty with a part, Sir Hamilton put over the melody in an astonishingly accurate and comprehensive whistler, which was always enthusiastically applauded by the remainder of the orchestra. He was also one of the greatest readers of scores among living conductors. Andersen Tyrer recalled one occasion at the Harty home when the famous William Walton, then a comparatively unknown composer, dropped in with the score of the first movement of his Symphony No. 1. Without hesitation, although he had never seen it before, Harty propped it up on the piano and gave a remarkable exhibition of sight

reading of all the parts. Later, Sir Hamilton conducted the London Symphony Orchestra when they presented that first movement only, followed by the Symphony in its entirety.

(Andersen Tyrer will leave for Australia shortly to conduct an augmented ABC orchestra in a series of concerts in Sydney and Melbourne before going on to South Africa.)

He Takes His Job Seriously

HECTOR CHEVIGNY, author of "Lost Empire," the ZB feature, is widely known and respected among radio writers for his endeavours to raise the standards of that field of writing.

Until 1937 he was director of the Scripts Division of the Columbia Broadcasting System on the West Coast of the U.S. Coming from a man with a Hollywood background, the creation of a serious historical drama like "Lost Empire" would seem something of a phenomenon. However, Chevigny, who comes of a pioneering French-Canadian family, is keenly interested in West Coast history, and is a serious historian.

In 1932 he dramatised over a Seattle station the complete history of the city of Seattle from the year of its foundation to 1900, finding material even in the files of the Fire Department and the Public Library. Later he was called on to settle a quarrel between two local pioneer societies, and to-day the scripts of his programme are in use in the National History classes of two Seattle colleges.

The ability to assimilate a great mass of knowledge in a short time is one of Chevigny's greatest assets. One characteristic story concerns his learning of music. After a few months of indifferent success as a staff writer on a Seattle radio station, he began keenly to feel his lack of musical knowledge, so he bought a piano and hired a teacher. Then, after three impatient months without much technical progress, he bought Prout's classical but formidable work "Harmony, Its Theory and Practice," and studied it alone. Six months later, he was able to identify by name the chords of a concerto.

Characteristically, after mastering the piano enough to play a Beethoven sonata, he lost interest. "I quit the third time I was introduced as someone who had learned the piano after 25."

In 1935, deciding that his fame as a radio writer must have preceded him, Chevigny moved to Hollywood, where he found it had done nothing of the sort. The studios remained cold to his story, and unimpressed by his frail, thick-lensed, rather academic appearance.

But, as always seems to happen in Hollywood success stories, he got his break—an important job with the Columbia Broadcasting System. A year later, he left with the title of Director of the Scripts Division to write a radio serial for May Robson, "Lady of Millions," which was heard in New Zealand over the ZB stations.

TRAGEDY OF BBC EXPERT



PROFESSOR JAMES
Responsible for "Lord Haw-Haw."

TRAGEDY has ended the professional career of Professor Arthur Lloyd James, of London University, one of the greatest living authorities on the English language and its pronunciation. He taught BBC announcers the correct, or at any rate a standardised, pronunciation of all difficult or doubtful words, and was recently engaged by the Government to train R.A.F. pilots to speak clearly by radio telephone. He wrote the Encyclopaedia Britannica article on pronunciation and phonetics, and his handbooks on Broadcast English are regarded as standard at the BBC. Examples: combatant (cum-batant), route (root), says (sez), garage (garridge), apparatus (apparaytus not apparattus), acumen (akewmen with accent on second syllable), laboratory (with accent on second syllable), quandary (kwondairy, second syllable again). The second edition of the booklet in 1931 changed the pronunciation given in the first edition of 1928, of idyll (from idill to eye-dill), iodine (from eye-o-dyne to eye-o-deen), and the "-yle" pronunciation of words such as fragile, profile, and facile, formerly given as "-ill."

Declaring that the BBC announcers were "too haw-haw" in their diction, Professor James was responsible for the

nickname "Lord Haw-Haw" given to the German radio propagandist.

At the beginning of the Blitzkrieg, Professor James and his wife (who was formerly well known as the concert violinist Elsie Owen) moved from London to Oxford. Before Christmas they visited London and ran smack into one of its most violent air raids. Severely shaken, the professor and his wife were taken to a nursing home, and later went back to their London house where they slept in the cellar.

Answering an anonymous phone call in the middle of January, London police visited the James home. In the dining room they found the professor, wandering dazedly, reports "Time." In the bedroom lay the body of his wife, her head bashed in.

From the professor's incoherent mumbings the police gleaned this explanation: "I thought my powers were failing, and I could not cope with my work. Rather than expect my wife to face a bleak future I decided she should die. . . . We were so happy. I wanted her to die while she was like that. . . . I thought I would 'also kill myself.'"

The Crown began its investigation, but the answer was obvious: cracked war nerves.