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VIOLINS AND BULLY-BEEF TINS

Ina Bosworth Remembers The Days Of 1914-1918

PLAYING from a stage composed entirely of bully-beef tins, hearing John Drinkwater read poetry to the troops at one o'clock in the morning, being locked up in a waiting-room at Amiens station while the town was under German fire, are some of the memories of the war of 1914-18 retained by Ina Bosworth, the Auckland violinist.

The war had completely upset the even tenor of the musical world when she made her debut as a violinist, after studying in London, but instead of returning to New Zealand she joined an organisation formed to provide entertainment for the troops, and from then on there were hardly enough hours in the day.

As leader of a trio of young musicians, comprising violin, 'cello and vocalist, she played in base camps in both France and Britain, in London theatres, rest billets, station platforms, et hoc. Of the pukka theatre shows she has sheaves of souvenirs in the form of autographed programmes, with many names which were then (and in some cases still are) household words. The Femina Trio, which Miss Bosworth led, is found cheek by jowl with such names as Marie Lohr, Gladys Cooper, George Hassall, famous as a war artist, Henry Ainley, the Shakesperian actor. In an inconspicuous corner



Alan Blakey photograph

INA BOSWORTH

. . . She took the biscuit

of one old programme can be found the name of a young actor, Herbert Marshall. Another includes George Robey who, presumably, informed his audience that he stopped, he looked, and he listened.

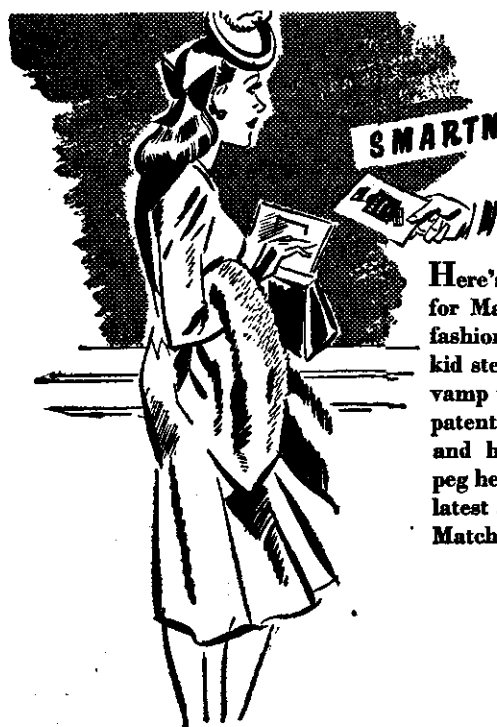
Among her souvenirs, however, autographs are not always so conventionally recorded. Army biscuits were frequently used for the purpose in those days, and one signature which she received in such a medium was that of Major-General the Right Hon. J. E. B. ("Fear and be Slain") Seely, now Lord Mottistone. Improvisations of all kinds were the order of these hectic days, as witness the bully-beef tin platform, and entertaining the troops was a job in which one could be on call at almost any hour of the day or night.

During the war, she made three trips to France to entertain soldiers in base camps and rest billets, each trip lasting two or three months. While on one of these tours, made under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A., the trio was put on to the wrong train at Boulogne and instead of landing at Rouen, as was intended, they eventually found themselves at Amiens. And Amiens was in a fine ferment, for the town was under German fire and the railway station was packed with civilians and troops. The situation was complicated by the fact that the authorities would not allow anyone to leave the station, and the three girls were finally locked in one of the waiting-rooms. From this confinement neither bribery nor threats could release them. The elderly stationmaster was adamant and there they had to remain all night until a train was available to take them back whence they came. Fortunately they had made friends with some young airmen before they arrived at Amiens and these hardy spirits brought them cups of coffee and something to eat, but even then they were kept securely locked up with their coffee and rolls.

Five Shows a Night

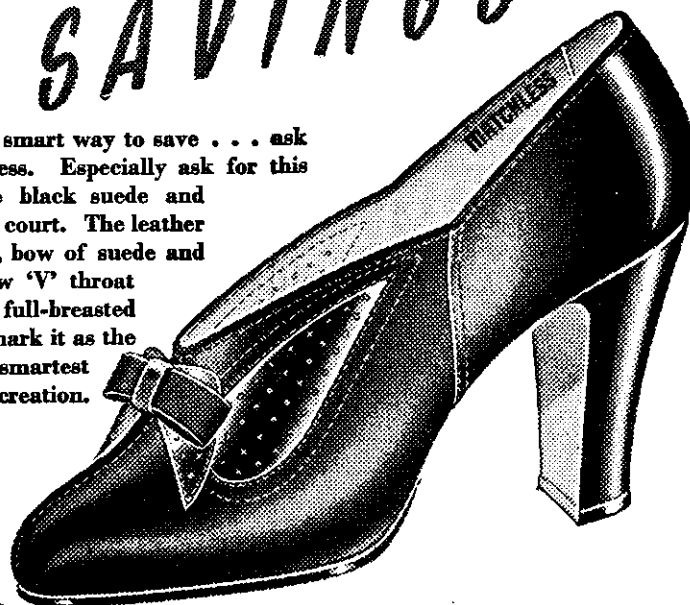
In the course of these trips, Miss Bosworth became very familiar with the French countryside and with the base camps and hospitals described by Vera Brittain in *Testament of Youth*. The work was exacting and there was no knowing when they would be called on to entertain. Often enough if a group of soldiers spied them with their equipment on a station platform it meant that there had to be an impromptu concert then and there. She became quite accustomed to playing in a heavy overcoat, and on one occasion played thus while a friendly hand held an umbrella over her to keep the rain off her violin. It was a commonplace to give five or more separate concerts in the one night. That applied to her work in England as well as in France, and in London she often played during air-raids and walked home when shrapnel was still whistling down. And wherever she went she could be sure of running up against someone from New Zealand. The times were tragic, but the general spirit of comradeship was a heartening compensation.

Since this war broke out, Ina Bosworth has again entertained soldiers, this time at Papakura Camp. Listeners who enjoy her playing will have an opportunity of hearing her from 1YA on Wednesday, July 16, when, with Kathleen O'Leary (piano) she will present Brahms' Sonata in A Major. This recital is scheduled for 7.30 p.m.



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