

music was, in 1924, still a dangerous adventure: it was a lucid book in its explanation of the new music when even the composers themselves were not altogether sure where they were going; it was also a wise book in that Dyson, for the most part, placed things in perspective. Now, 30 years later, Sir George Dyson publishes a slender volume of essays, *Fiddling While Rome Burns*. Not even the sub-title, "A Musician's Apology," can prevent the disappointment at realising that Sir George has never quite come to grips with the problems he so adventurously put forward in 1924. Penetrating as he still is in his analysis of the situation, a shadow hangs over his argument about contemporary music, the shadow of "there's no time like the old times."

When Dyson gets off the creative side of his art and examines the administrative, educational and critical aspects of music, he becomes the George Dyson who wrote a successful army manual on hand grenades. What he says is good sense, clearly and convincingly put over. He deplores festivals—like Salzburg and Glyndebourne—which "skim the cream" but "do not create artists." He discusses the importance of the amateur in English music; he explores new channels of patronage and criticises the BBC's conservative policy as a music patron ("musicians as such have no place in its governing body, and the upper reaches of authority tend to be somewhat remote from practical musical issues"); and, off on another tack, he launches a shaft at the contemporary fetish of performing old music in the original style ("At the first Handel festival the alto parts were sung by forty-eight men, doubled by thirteen oboes. Do we really wish to disinter this past? Could we bear the raw sound of even one 18th Century oboe?").

In all his essays, George Dyson seems to be an observer rather than a partner in these musical affairs. He writes in an urbane style which is the man himself. In fact, it is not only the first essay which is autobiographical. The whole book is a study of George Dyson and his contribution to music in England.

—Owen Jensen

MUDDLED HISTORIANS

GERMAN HISTORY. some new German views; edited by H. Kohn: Allen and Unwin. English price 18/-.

THIS book is not, as the title might lead one to expect, about new views on German history. It consists of an apparently haphazard collection of essays by German historians re-thinking their "politics." Most of them used to worship Bismarck and Ranke's idea that the power-state is the goal of historical development, and, e.g., constitutionalism, a historical freak. These historians have now seen that the attainment of that goal can have undesirable consequences. Therefore, they are putting their doubts before us. One essay in particular, in which Meinecke now prefers Burkhardt to Ranke, deserves a comment similar to the one made by Strachey on Acton. Acton, he said, was a historian who had come through laborious research to the

(continued on next page)

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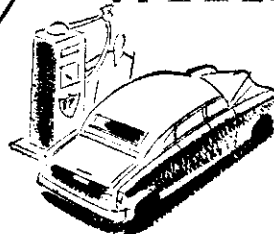
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