

and so closely does the story follow his escapades, that the screen *Pickwick* seems at times more his story than that of the General Chairman. Even James Hexter, in steel-rimmed spectacles and the traditionally tight breeches, can scarcely hold attention when Jingle is in full cry. The film is, you might say, Jingle all the way. But that should not be construed to mean that the other characters fall short. There are more than forty players (ranging from Donald Wright, as Buzzfuz, to Sam Costa—a mischievous Joe Trotter), and they are all worth seeing. Dickens characters, of course, are always visually entertaining on the screen, and here they are obviously played with relish. *The Pickwick Papers*, in short, can be commended not only to Dickensians, but to anyone in search of good fun. Needless to say it completely fulfils the earnest hope of the Author in that "No incident or expression occurs which could call a blush into the most delicate cheek, or wound the feelings of the most sensitive person."

## THE ACTRESS

(M.G.M.)

[L]IFE with Father, or Mother (or both) is one of the great institutions of the American theatre—and therefore of the American cinema. Generally it is a pretty extroverted sort of existence, whichever parent is on the ascendant. If Father rules the roost (*Life with Father*, *Cheaper by the Dozen*) the conventions demand a fair measure of social security for the family, and plenty of robust sentiment. If Mother is the breadwinner (*I Remember Mama*, *Chicken Every Sunday*) security almost inevitably supervenes before the final curtain. In any case, there are usually enough boisterous children to frighten any wolf from the door. *The Actress*, adapted for the screen by Ruth Gordon from her play *Years Ago* (which in turn was based on her own early life) breaks with tradition in a number of ways. This is a story of life with Father and Mother, but it is a life in which security is never quite achieved and, where—since there is only one child—there is not the weight of numbers and noise to keep worry out of earshot. Though it has some broadly comic moments, though Father is in his way an eccentric, and the only daughter a stage-struck romantic in her teens, *The Actress* is only incidentally funny. It eschews the flamboyance of the better-known family sagas, comes much closer to our common experience, and in the manner of its telling has a sharp flavour all its own. There are only three players of any consequence. Of these, Spencer Tracy is easily the most impressive. His Father is credible from every angle. Teresa Wright plays the more restrained part of Mother with a quiet competence, and the ox-eyed Miss Simmons is the daughter, I found her just as wearing at times, as Father did. *The Actress*, I should say, isn't everyone's picture, but middle-aged parents with teen-aged daughters (and eroded bank-balances) will find it easy to take.

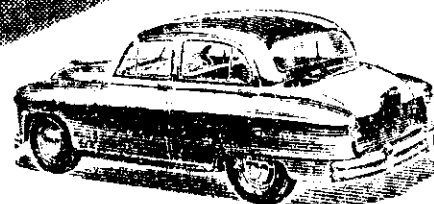
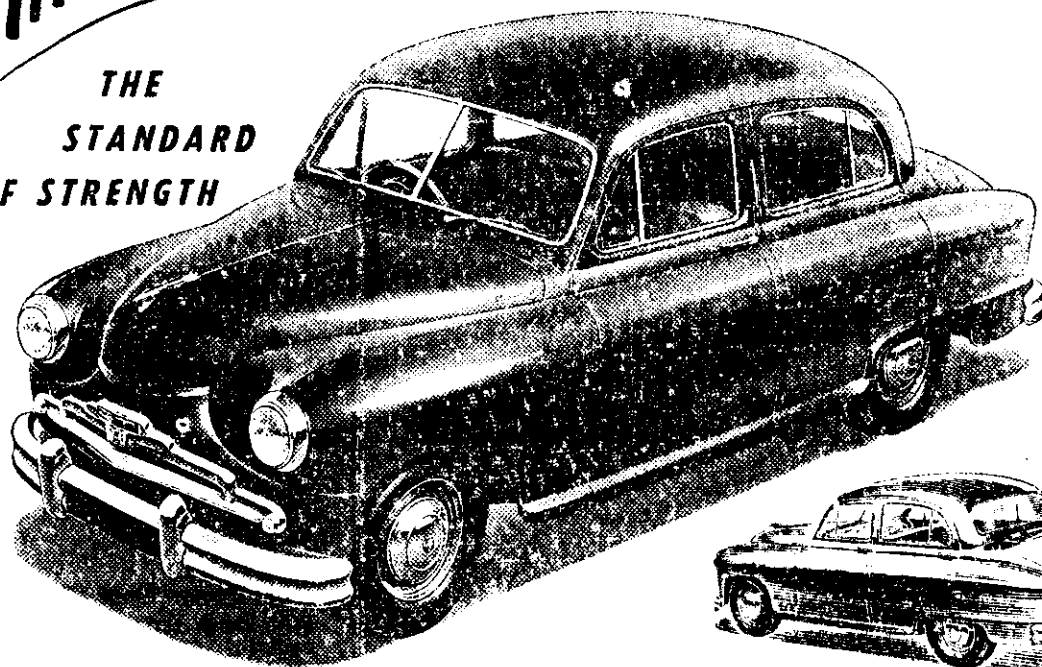
## Pioneer Schooling

[I]N the pioneering days in New Zealand the journey along the road to universal secular education was a long and slow one. Early schools, many of them private or denominational, were modelled on those of Britain, and mass instruction, rigid discipline, and a minimum of cost were some of the ideas brought out from Victorian England. Many schools were built facing the south, after the English fashion. Pupil teachers started work at 14 at £20 a year, and even qualified teachers often received less than a ploughman or farm labourer. The story of these beginnings of education in New Zealand, leading up to the much-debated National Education Act of 1877, is told in the dramatised programme *First Bell*, which will be broadcast from 4YA at 2.0 p.m. on Thursday, July 29. The programme was written by David White and produced by Alan Morris in the Christchurch studios of the NZBS.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 23, 1954

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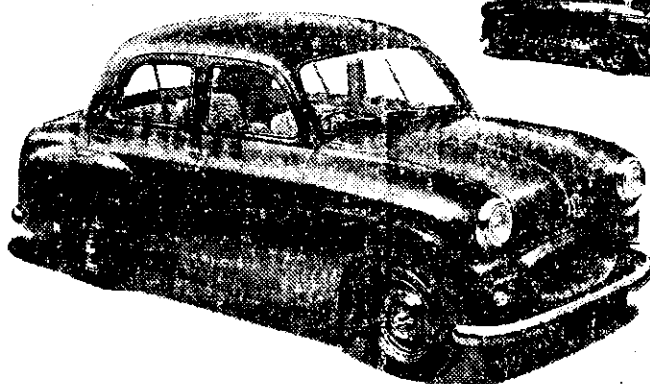


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