

"THE OLD TOUGH"

THE LAST YEARS OF HENRY J. WOOD,
by Jessie Wood; Victor Gollancz, English
price 12/6.

(Reviewed by Owen Jensen)

THE occasion was a wartime "Aid to China" concert in the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. Sir Henry Wood was conductor and he had brought with him Yehudi Menuhin as soloist, both of them giving their services for the cause. Despite travel hazards, the black-out and a considerable reshuffling of engagements, Sir Henry had fulfilled his promise to come to Liverpool. "Here he is," was the merry introduction as he came on the stage, "the old tough has delivered the goods." That was the pattern of Sir Henry Wood's life—to be where he was wanted, when he was wanted, spending himself indefatigably in what was both his work and his chief delight—music.

The "old tough," "old Timber," or just "old Henry" was a phenomenon among English conductors, and the antithesis in his outlook of the modern virtuoso conductor. He was in the completest sense a craftsman, devoted to music, absolutely loyal to those with whom he



SIR HENRY WOOD
"He delivered the goods"

worked, and ceaseless in his efforts to improve music and its status in Great Britain. *My Life of Music*—someone has said it should have been called "My Life For Music"—is the autobiography

of a working man. Sir Henry was the man: the work was music. Jessie Wood's *The Last Years of Henry J. Wood* carries on the story where Sir Henry left off and fills in some of the gaps the musician left in his autobiography.

In Jessie Wood's book, an account coloured by the author's strong personal affection, Sir Henry emerges as the musician both players and listeners remember, meticulous in every detail, preparing his scores down to the last bow mark, punctual in rehearsal, firm but understanding in his handling of solo artists, and always using his baton as a musical instrument, never as an egotistical implement of showmanship. "I paint a picture with my baton," he used to say.

This is the Sir Henry Wood everyone knew. Jessie Wood, as well, adds the background. She tells of the musician's struggles to achieve his ideals, especially in ensuring the survival of his first and last musical love, "The Proms." The efficient conductor has to assume the role of not so experienced business man, impatient of red tape, chafing at the frustration of attending to all the niggling detail of organisation.

This, the 60th year of the Proms, is a continuing answer to Sir Henry Wood's enthusiasm. Posthumously, his stature both as man and musician be-

comes enhanced as his remarkable achievements are seen in perspective.

OTHER MEN'S JOBS

ONCE A MINER, by Norman Harrison; Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, English price 12/6. LUMBERJACK, by Jock Fairlie; Hodder and Stoughton, English price 12/6.

WHEN friends have complained about miners' strikes or the price of coal I have always said that I should not like to be a miner, and am willing to pay someone else to get the coal that, directly or indirectly, I use. Norman Harrison was man-powered in 1942 to the Snowdown coal-field in Kent. He stayed there for five years, shared in every kind of hard and dangerous work there is in a coalmine, "graduated" as a collier, and worked his own "stint" of coal. In this book he communicates his knowledge and experience in direct and graphic writing. Those who would like to know about the life of a coal-miner—in one coalmine at least—should read it.

For myself, I'd rather be a lumberjack—but too late now! Jock Fairlie, a news reporter in London, restless after demobilisation, suddenly decided to go to Canada and eventually got a job in a lumber camp on Vancouver Island. His book tells a vivid story of his experiences, and just how tough they were to a "limey." There's a thread of romance, but it doesn't get in the way of the main theme. His characters, as he tells

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