

THE VOICES OF HISTORY

"IN January (1908)," wrote Alexandra Tolstoy, "Father received a present of a sort we had never seen before—a dictaphone sent him from America by Thomas Edison. When I had set it up, he tried to speak into it, but was so excited that he stuttered and forgot what he intended to say. 'Stop the machine, stop it,' he cried to me. 'It's dreadfully exciting,' he added with a sigh. 'Probably such a machine is good for well-balanced Americans, but it is not for us Russians.' Nevertheless, he did on occasion make use of it."

But then, the Russians were always unpredictable, and Edison's proud boast when he created the phonograph that "It will henceforth be possible to preserve, for future generations, the voices as well as the words of our Washingtons and Lincolns..." came substantially true.

In "Hark! The Years!" the ZB Sunday Showcase programme to be broadcast at 9.35 p.m. on Sunday, November 28, listeners will be able to hear the actual voices of people who made history, from Florence Nightingale (repeating a prayer for her comrades in the Crimean War) and Thomas Edison himself, up to Albert Einstein and Gertrude

Stein, the controversial poet. In this programme, listeners are given a true scrap-book in sound, and can turn back the pages of history with the aid of a commentary by the well-known screen actor Fredric March and a musical score by Nathaniel Shilkret.

The "Gay Nineties" live again with the voice of Lillian Russell, who is heard singing in a Music Hall of the "Mauve Decade," recreating the gaiety and splendour of those fabulous years. Enrico Caruso also sings again, and the dramatic tones of John Barrymore at the crest of his career are heard once more.

The new century dawns, and with it a mighty era of Polar exploration, which makes Commander Robert E. Peary's description of his discovery of the North Pole in 1909 of particular interest. In the political field Teddy Roosevelt campaigns fiercely for re-election at the head of his newly-formed Progressive Party. Eugene Debs, one of the foremost figures in American Socialism, and an advocate of trade unionism and pacifism, speaks again. Then, as war clouds gather in 1914, Woodrow Wilson, General Pershing and Marshal Foch are heard speaking of the gravity of the situation.

But not only the threat of war with Germany was in the air. Russia was on

the eve of revolution, and Lenin, the revolutionist, is heard berating Capitalism and (in Russian, of course) advocating his own drastic remedy. The social conscience also stirs in America, where William Howard Taft speaks on the Rights of Labour, and Henry Cabot Lodge speaks on the League of Nations. From the concert halls of that time, too, the world-famous voice of Madame Schumann Heink, the Austrian-Czech contralto, is heard again.

Sweeping into the "roaring twenties," listeners will hear the voices of President Warren Harding, comedians Will Rogers and W. C. Fields, cinema idol Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and the evangelist Aimée Semple McPherson. In the world of sport, personalities like Bobby Jones, Jack Dempsey and the "Home Run King" Babe Ruth, take the field again. The air age captures the world's imagination with the return of the "Lone Eagle," young Charles Lindbergh, who is heard modestly giving thanks for the wildly sentimental acclaim accorded him. Political issues provoke bitter debate as we hear Calvin Coolidge, Jimmy Walker and Herbert Hoover on the war debts question. Another continent stirs when the gentle voice of Mahatma Gandhi reverberates throughout India as



FREDRIC MARCH, who speaks the commentary in the programme "Hark! The Years!"

he declares himself, on his way to prison, a "soldier of Peace." Then come the depressed thirties... the applesellers at the corner... "Brother can you spare a dime?"... the bread-lines twisting across America's Main Street. And from across the Atlantic in Britain comes the voice of George Bernard Shaw scathingly lamenting the world's economic plight. Finally, Franklin Delano Roosevelt occupied the White House, declaring, "My friends... I still believe in ideals..."

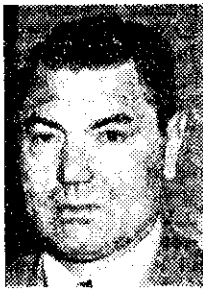
In "Hark! The Years!" each voice is the actual recorded voice of the person described, heard in its historical setting. For the creation of this composite programme hundreds of old wax cylinders, disc records, transcriptions and sound tracks were auditioned. Many hours of research and selection, pre-recording and filtering, writing and editing, went into its making.



LENIN



AIMEE McPHERSON



JACK DEMPSEY



GERTRUDE STEIN



EINSTEIN



F. D. ROOSEVELT

UNKIND HEARTS AND CORONETS

NZBS Productions have two important offerings playing this week. From 1YA and 4YZ listeners will hear the New Zealand Players' Company, under contract to the NZBS, in St. John Ervine's comedy-drama *Friends and Relations*, and from 3YC and 4YC Clemence Dane's adaptation and translation of Edmond Rostand's poetic drama *L'Aiglon*, the story of Napoleon II.



RICHARD CAMPION, who produced "Friends and Relations" for the NZBS

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 19, 1954.

Friends and Relations was staged at Dublin's Abbey Theatre in 1941. Although St. John Ervine has long been connected with the Abbey, and was a prominent member of the Irish Renaissance group, his work has developed on different lines from those envisaged by Yeats and Lady Gregory. With him, naturalism and objectivity, sometimes gay, sometimes satirical, began to find their place in the new drama. St. John Ervine, like Shaw, became indeed so much the Anglo-Irishman that many of his plays are untouched by "Irish-ry" altogether.

Reviewing a BBC broadcast of the play in *The Listener*, J. C. Trewin calls *Friends and Relations* a "determined comedy about a will and its outcome, in which the dramatist all but tosses the fire-irons at some of his peculiarly selfish characters." The explanation of St. John Ervine's particularly virulent studies of some of the characters in this play seems to lie in a long-standing hatred of class barriers and the way in which they reinforce worthless prejudices.

St. John Ervine has also won a reputation as dramatic critic on a number of newspapers, notably the *Morning Post* and the *Observer*, while in 1928-1929 he was guest critic of the *New York World*. Ervine has written several books on the theatre, and in 1937 became President of the League of British Dramatists.

Richard Campion, producer of the New Zealand Players, in one of his rare

pied à terre moments in between air hops from Kaikohe to the Bluff, found time to produce *Friends and Relations* for the NZBS. Leading roles are played by Michael Cotterill (Adam Bothwell), and Peggy Walker (Mrs. Corken), supported by Ruth Alley (Kate), Delme Hope (Fanny Cairns), Diane Rhodes (Doreen), Molly Brown (Jenny Conn), John Hunter (Arthur), Charles Sinclair (Edward Scantlebury) and John Gordon (James Finlay).

On March 15, 1900, all Paris waited for a great event. France's greatest actress, Sarah Bernhardt, was to open in a new play by the romantic theatre-poet Edmond Rostand. Admittedly, Sarah was fifty-five and her part that of a boy of twenty-one, but she was the divine Sarah, and the boy—the Eaglet, Napoleon's son, whose story has the same cruel, tragic charm for the French as that of the Young Pretender for us.

Rostand was a poet with a burning love of his country. In *L'Aiglon* his theme is "the poor boy's" passionate longing for his home and his birthright—France. The Eaglet, crowned King of Rome as a baby, was the only son of Napoleon and Marie Louise, the daughter of the Austrian Emperor whose armies he had overwhelmed at the battle of Wagram. The marriage was engineered by Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor, and Napoleon's implacable enemy. When Napoleon's empire collapsed Marie Louise returned to the Austrian Court, where her son—"the



EDMOND ROSTAND

white Hamlet" he has been called—was brought up as the Duke of Reichstadt. He attempted escape to France, but his own instability and physical weakness brought about his early death.

William Austin produced *L'Aiglon* with Alan Rowe as the Duc de Reichstadt, Roy Leywood as Flambeau, Kenneth Firth as Metternich, and Davina Whitehouse and Paddy Turner as Marie Louise and Therese de Lorget. *L'Aiglon* will be heard from 3YC at 9.32 p.m. and 4YC at 7.30 p.m. on November 24, and *Friends and Relations* from 4YZ at 7.42 p.m. on November 27, and 1YA at 3.0 p.m. on November 28. Both plays will be heard later from other National stations.