

the Plowman rich merchants are urged to repair "wikked wayes" (bad roads) and "Brygges to-broke by the heye weyes." Then, when they are about to die, St. Michael himself will be sent to them to drive away devils "that they be not tormented by wicked spirits in their last moments."

ANGELS and Devils are not as numerous as they used to be, or as active, or as formidable, and I don't blame the Commissioner of Works for neglecting to invoke their aid. But if it is true that his Report calls the bridging position "impossible," it

FEBRUARY 20 would have been logical to try other than possible methods of dealing with it. Dunedin had a surgeon once who would not operate until he had asked God to guide his hand and steady his nerves, and the younger surgeon who told me about him said that the old man was "miraculously successful." I don't know whether it is harder or easier to take a shilling out of a taxpayer's pocket than to remove a stone from his gall-bladder, but I would like to see the supernatural method tried. There was a religious order in the 12th Century founded for the express purpose of building bridges, and their bridges still stand today. I wonder if they know about it in the Ministry of Works—if the Commissioner has one of the Bridge Friars over his desk and the famous arches of Avignon confronting him when he opens his door. If they are not there the reason perhaps is that faith and works no longer

go together, but I would like to see an attempt made to unite them again at the Waitaki.

I think I might go to church again if faith built a chapel on the banks of the river and brought all the farmers from both sides to work as well as worship. It is not many years since one of our Prime Ministers rejoiced publicly that the Holy Land had returned to a kingdom whose ruler was of the seed of Jesse. If there are not 375,000 people still in New Zealand who could be persuaded, for the Glory of God and their own eternal welfare, to restore one foot apiece of our derelict bridges, I know nothing about the potentialities of my countrymen.

WE have seen our young cuckoo again, this time without any warblers. It was in the same kowhai tree, and when disturbed it flew only a few yards to a nectarine tree from which it watched us for several minutes. When we tried to examine it through binoculars it flew off into Jim's trees 50 yards away, but was back in the kowhai half an hour later. Although we can't be sure that it is the bird we saw with the warblers, we know from its feathers that it is a young bird, and its return to the same group of trees makes other possibilities unlikely. I hope it remains alert enough to evade the cat. It is safe as long as it keeps to the trees and is satisfied with caterpillars and moths. But that is like saying that I will never become a drunken driver if I am satisfied with tea and coffee.

(To be continued)

The Orchestra

MUSIC FOR CHILDREN

NEXT week the Orchestra leaves for a jaunt in the country with concerts at Hamilton, New Plymouth, Wanganui and Palmerston North. In the first three places the Orchestra will give special concerts for schools (1XH, March 28; 2XP, March 30; 2XA, April 1). These are some of the most important programmes in the Orchestra's schedule; and some of the most difficult, too, both to arrange and to present.

When a conductor arranges a programme he almost certainly has his audience in mind; but if, in some way or other, his choice should misfire, he would be extremely unlucky if his music did not hit some other mark. Programmes for schools have one aim only—children, mostly of the teen-age group. Children, the most selective and the most critical of audiences, they know what they want or, at least, they know when they get it, and then they can be the most generous with their attention. But you aren't misfire.

Sometimes in the past, one has a suspicion that schools' programmes were not all they might be. The fault, too often, was one of playing down to the audience rather than going over their heads. Mr. Robertson seems to have given much thought to his first school programme. On paper it looks quite a thrill. There is colour, rhythm, excitement, music for the imagination, and one short piece—the first movement from Beethoven's

Symphony No. 8 in F—to make the audience sit up and think as well as feel.

Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* will be known already to some of the children. Those fortunate enough to be at the concerts will see what the instruments look like as well as being able to learn what sort of sound they make. And the audiences at Hamilton, New Plymouth and Wanganui are being honoured, too, with what is probably a first performance in New Zealand, a fantasia for piano and orchestra by Saint-Saens. He called it *Africa*.

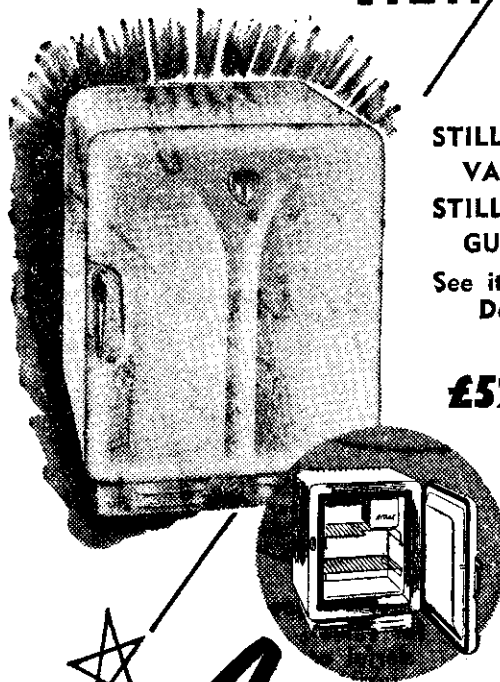
Knowing Saint-Saens, I imagine you won't hear the rattle of native drums or anything like that in it, but it's likely to be filled up to the brim with effective piano writing. With Cara Hall as pianist, one should get a very good idea of how well the piano sounds with the orchestra.

Then there is Wagner's overture to *The Flying Dutchman*, some of his most vivid music. It is the picture of the Flying Dutchman's terrible ship scudding before the storm, doomed to sail on forever. Sullen seas, lightning, the merry songs of happy sailors in a passing ship: it would be an unlively imagination that could not be inspired by this exciting music. And to end this school programme there are the popular Polovtsian Dances from Borodin's opera *Prince Igor*. Yes, I think all this music should go down well with the children up north, and with James Robertson to introduce the programme, this should be a landmark in musical enjoyment.

—Owen Jensen

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 18, 1955.

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