

FAMOUS TUNES SOLD FOR A SONG

THERE'S a long, long trail for the song-writer, and whether it's sunny or shadowy seems to depend less on his musical ability than on his commercial acumen. A few days ago when Zo Elliott, the American composer of "There's a Long, Long Trail," arrived in England there was also published the will of his British counterpart, Fred Godfrey.

In the 40 years since Zo Elliott wrote his most popular song, it has earned him 70,000 dollars, and still brings in about 1000 dollars a year. The writer who has provided two generations of servicemen with the emotional relief and the sentimental nostalgia of "Bless 'Em All" and "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty," left only £202.

In these days of radio "plugs" and disc jockeys, songs which are forgotten in a few months make fortunes for lesser composers than Fred Godfrey. The writer of "Who Were You With Last Night?" and "All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor," and half a dozen others equally famous had only a gift for writing songs, but no talent for selling them.

Many of his abiding tunes were sold for a song. When he and a rival tossed up to see who would sell a song to Vesta Victoria, star of the old-time music halls, and he won the toss with "Now I Have to Call Him Father," the two men had only 3d between them.

Almost every London music publisher turned down "Who Were You With Last

Night?" They read the first few lines:
Who were you with last night,
Out in the pale moonlight?
It wasn't your sister, it wasn't your ma,
Ah ah ah ah ah-ah-ah-ah.

Then they waved it away, thinking that the composer had lost his inspiration.

"Then one day," Fred Godfrey said years later, "Mark Sheridan of the Tivoli asked me if I had any ideas for a good chorus song. I sat down and played it. Good old Mark put it on at the London Pavilion and it was a success from the start. A tenner I got for it—and glad to get rid of the song, too."

One of the great songs of the First World War, "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty," was written in four hours. With two friends he was walking past the old Oxford Music Hall in London where there was a show called "Blighty." One of them suddenly said: "What an idea for a song!" Within a few days all the country seemed to be singing it.

"I got—not very much," Fred Godfrey used to say. "But I mustn't complain: it was the custom then to sell a song outright for a guinea or two. No one troubled about royalties."

So long as English soldiers serve abroad they will sing it, though few now know what "Blighty" really means. The soldiers of the Kipling era brought the word back from India where, in Hindustani, it means "foreign," and thus by association for the Indians it came to refer to Britain.

He was also noted for his Irish songs—"It Takes an Irish Heart to Sing an Irish Song," "Irish and Proud of It,"

and "When They Ask You What Your Name Is, Tell 'Em It's Malloy." His Irish mother probably approved of these, but his English father a prosperous auctioneer at Swansea, begged him to follow in the business. However, after Fred's first success as a boy with "Blue eyes, true eyes, sweetest I ever knew," there was no changing his mind.

By devoting his whole life to being a backroom boy for the music halls and for screen and radio stars such as Gracie Fields, he made enough money to send his four daughters to boarding school. One of them said when his will was published: "Because my father left only £202 it doesn't mean he was a poor man. It's just that he spent it as soon as he made it."

With hundreds of songs to his name, scribbled on the back of old envelopes or composed during bus rides, he worked till three months before his death, at the age of about 70. It was enough for him that some of the tunes he had written with nostalgia while in France with the Royal Naval Air Service should have become part of the serviceman's



VESTA VICTORIA
No disc-jockeys in her day

heritage—with their unprintable amendments. He knew that feeling, too.

As for Zo Elliott, who knows how to call the tune when it comes to selling his songs, he said: "One of the happiest moments of my life was to hear my song 'British Eighth' played at the White House just before I left. President Eisenhower was entertaining Monty and they walked arm-in-arm into the hall as the band played." —J. W. Goodwin

Griller Quartet's Second Visit

THE Griller String Quartet, which this year is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its formation, will arrive in New Zealand this month to begin an eight weeks' tour of both Islands under the direction of the New Zealand Federation of Chamber Music Societies in conjunction with the NZBS. It will be the quartet's second visit to this country. Hephzibah Menuhin, sister of Yehudi Menuhin, will appear with the group in four quintet recitals and in two solo recitals with the National Orchestra. The Quartet's 20 concerts will be given in centres from Auckland to Dunedin, and in extension of its regular summer school of chamber music at Berkeley, California, it will conduct New Zealand's first group teaching at St. Peter's School, Cambridge, in August. Hephzibah Menuhin, who will arrive at the end of July, will appear in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

The Griller String Quartet tours widely in Britain, the Continent and the United States of America, and spends several months annually as Resident Quartet at the University of California where it gives lectures, recitals and coaching to chamber music students. In recent years several works have been dedicated to the Quartet, notably by Rubbra and Bloch. Sidney Griller, the principal, says that when members of his quartet were students at the Royal College of Music their eyes were opened to the possibilities of quartet playing at its best by hearing the original Pro Arte Quartet. They wondered how such



THE GRILLER QUARTET: From left—Sidney Griller, Jack O'Brien, Philip Burton and Colin Hampton

co-ordination was possible and came to the conclusion that apart from being individually such fine players, they must of necessity be spending so much of their time together that they obviously had come to think as one person.

"Our own career has proved this to be absolutely true," says Sidney Griller, "and any quartet whose members are determined to have 'a life' outside the quartet is courting disaster. It is pretty

obvious that four people 'on the road' cannot get away from each other, and it is the ability to endure each other's presence that in no small degree helps towards the success of the quartet. In spite of certain exceptions I have always firmly believed that no really fine quartet could continue to exist if any of its members failed to devote themselves entirely to quartet playing, and not use it merely as an additional

source of income; to do this is an insult to the greatness of chamber music."

The first recital by the Griller String Quartet will be given at the Concert Chamber of the Auckland Town Hall on Saturday, July 11. The first half of this public concert (beginning at 8.0 p.m.) will be broadcast by a YC station link. Listeners will hear Haydn's String Quartet in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3, and the Beethoven Quartet No. 11 in F Minor, Op. 95.