

# Sporting Papers and Wireless

## English Journalist in N.Z.

## Discusses Radio, Newspapers and Gracie Fields



**F**OUR months' leave has given Mr. W. Binns, a young English sporting writer attached to the staff of the Manchester edition of the London "Daily Express," the opportunity to travel half across the world, and he is, at the moment, enjoying an all-too-brief stay in New Zealand. Mr. Binns arrived by the Remuera the other day and, after a few days in Wellington, he journeyed north, and is spending a week in Auckland before departing for England.

To a "Radio Record" representative he spoke of the influence of wireless on various activities at Home. "The sporting side of journalism has become tremendously important in the last few years and, on some of the English papers the sporting writer is getting a salary as big as the editor's. But broadcasting has changed sports reporting to this extent. Whereas once the result was the thing people bought the paper for, to-day it is the comment. Wireless can give the whole world the result of a football match the second the game is finished, so people don't need to buy newspapers now to discover the winner. But wireless can never supplant the newspaper for commentaries—and that is why the efficient sporting critic is able to hold down a good fat salary on a newspaper.

"During the Australian test matches last year Howard Marshall, the famous B.B.C. commentator who gave the world the broadcast of the Duke of Kent's wedding, gave four hours' cricket comment every day over the national network. But I don't think these broadcasts affected the sales of English papers one iota. Cricket fans still bought the papers to read what their favourite sporting writers thought of the play."

One of Mr. Binns's most interesting assignments was the fortnight he spent recently at Blackpool reporting on the making of Gracie Fields's new picture, "Sing As We Go," the main portion of which was made at the famous Lancashire seaside resort. "This film—the scenario was written by J. B. Priestley—is going to be a big boost for Blackpool. Why, even the Mayor's in it! There was an amusing incident during the 'shooting' of the picture. One scene shows Gracie arriving by train and a big crowd was being held back while the cameras showed the star stepping out of the carriage. Just as everything was going nicely a man walked out of the crowd, shook the star by the hand, and said: 'By gum, Gracie, Ah'm reet glad to see y' agen, lass.' It was one of Gracie's old-time friends showing his pleasure at the meeting—but what the directors said about a ruined sequence is not very printable.

*One of the most interesting assignments to come the way of the young English newspaper man who is interviewed on this page was the writing up for the London "Daily Express" of the incidents connected with the making of Gracie Fields's new picture, "Sing as We Go." Most of it was filmed at Blackpool and the above scene shows Gracie (in the centre of the group) arriving on a more or less trusty steed. "Sing as We Go" will be screened in New Zealand shortly.*

"Another scene in the film shows the famous Blackpool promenade and a 400-yard stretch of this was closed for four hours one afternoon while the scene was being 'shot.' Trams and all kinds of traffic were held up, but the people took it in good part."

Mr. Binns said that the British Broadcasting Corporation has just completed a new station for the North Regional—the station that serves Manchester and the surrounding country. For the most part the programmes are good. In the summer they are mostly from seaside resorts—concert parties at the Isle of Man, Blackpool, Fleetwood and other places. These concert parties are of a remarkably high standard, and one man, a friend of Mr. Binns, told him that, as a result of two broadcasts at the beginning of the summer, his takings at Blackpool had increased by £1000 for the season.

"I have been amazed at the number of newspapers in a small country like New Zealand," continued Mr. Binns. "And also at the amount of work that New Zealand newspaper men cover. I was on a paper in Leeds for several months, and during the whole of that time I only wrote two articles. I was at the court every day and all my stuff was telephoned from the court to a man at the office who knocked it into shape, wrote the headings and so on. The telephone is being used to a growing extent in English newspaper offices, and there are some journalists who are not called upon to write a story from one year's end to another. There is pretty fierce newspaper competition in Blackpool, a town which has an ordinary population of about 120,000. There are three regular evening papers, although in the summer, when Blackpool has a holiday population of anything up to 800,000 people, another half-dozen evening papers will flow in from the bigger cities.

"Blackpool has little difficulty in holding its place as one of the leading holiday resorts of Great Britain. It is situated on a glorious strip of coast known as the Fylde Coast, and it is connected by an excellent system of roads with Manchester, Liverpool, the Midland towns, and the northern counties. The road between Preston and Blackpool—a stretch of concrete on which cars can run three (Contd. on p. 13, col. 3.)