

PERSONALITIES

of the week

The Native Returns

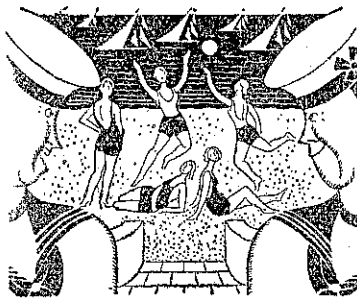
JOHN COATES, "Arch-Chanter

John," as Sir Edward Elgar styled him, is one of the most appealing of living singers and considers he owes much to his mother's influence. She once gave him an old singer's advice—"Read the words," she said when he was about to sing a song he had never seen before. This he now does invariably with the result that many songs submitted to him are condemned before the music is looked at. Some years ago Mr. Coates went back to his native Yorkshire village and had a look over the church where he began his musical career as a chorister. The verger asked his name, and he replied that he was John Coates, a singer, but that evidently conveyed nothing. "I used to be in the choir here," he added, "but I've got on a bit since then." "As 'ta a good job?" asked the verger. "Not so bad," answered John, "I'm still

singing." The verger paused to consider what might constitute a good job at singing, then asked, almost with awe, "'Appen, then, tha's in t' Leeds choir?"

Dixon's Signature Tune

REGINALD DIXON, organist at the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, has a most appropriate signature tune, "I Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside." The point about Reginald Dixon is that he is the only "cinema organist" who can



broadcast in the evenings. By this means he is of great assistance to the B.B.C. The real cinema organists are hampered, of course, by the fact that films are being shown at these times. The Tower buildings are owned by the Blackpool Corporation, and although they were built in the late Victorian era, they are still modern and pleasing. A number of cafes, restaurants, exhibitions, and even a zoo and an aquarium all find a place, but the ballroom, with its mammoth "cinema organ" is the real attraction.

A Few "Coward-isms"

SIR HENRY COWARD, until lately conductor of the famous Sheffield Choir, had some amusing and sometimes, embarrassing mannerisms. At rehearsal he was most impulsive. He had an inexhaustible store of epithets—"You miserable tenors," he would call out, "afraid of a top G." "You sing it as if you were all club-footed," he occasionally told the basses. "Don't talk to that lady; if she's not marked her copy, don't remind her; leave her to her conscience." "I told you to mark it 'forte,'" he shouts in a rage, to a timid-voiced soprano. "It is marked 'forte,'" she ventures to say. "Well then, why don't you fort?" he retorts amid laughter. "Hello! here is the recurring decimal again," he remarks as an habitual late-comer makes her way to her seat.

Instinct v. Interpretation

LIKE her fellow-artist, Paul Robeson, Marion Anderson was born to a heritage of such singing as originally inspired the "spirituals," and where others have recourse to "interpreta-

tion," she has but to call upon her instinct, and, again like Robeson, this instinct carries Miss Anderson smoothly into the difficult field of lieder singing and the realm of grand opera, and again she triumphs. It is when we are privileged to hear such artists as Mr. Robeson and Miss Anderson that it is most strongly borne upon us how slanderous it is to attribute to the same source as the "spirituals" that item of American exports known as "swamp-stuff."

"Winnie Speaking!"

EVERY radio listener ought to make it his business to give "Winnie" (Mr. Harry Hemsley's dream child) a hearing. How he manages to carry on the whole family discussion (minus mother, of course) is the famous child impersonator's secret. Naturally, he is a prime favourite with B.B.C. listeners. In his London broadcasts he reads from script, which has previously been submitted for approval. He naturally takes note of any official blue pencillings (they rarely occur), and he does his best to follow the script, but one or the other of his imaginary children may be suddenly inspired to say something that does not figure in the copy, and without any hesitation he gives voice to whatever happens to be in her mind.

85 Not Out!

NO mention of the old-time music-halls could ever be made without the name of Charles Coborn at once springing to the mind, for he was one of the brightest stars in the variety constellation of nearly half a century ago. A great comedian then, he still, at the age of 85, retains much of his old boisterous personality. Mr. Coborn's recordings conjure up scenes of a smoke-filled, old-time music-hall, glasses clinking, and the chairman knocking with his mallet for silence as he rises to announce the next item. The original singer of "Two Lovely Black Eyes" and "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" is a lay-reader at his church, and a vigorous long-distance hiker.

Loves Opera

NOW in his prime, Dennis Noble is a native of Bristol, whose Cathedral school he attended with good results when a youngster. He was later specially trained for an operatic career by Dinh. Gilly. Although opera has done much to make his name well known—he has figured in grand opera roles at Covent Garden and all over Europe—his amazing versatility has contributed considerably to his universal appeal among all types of music lovers. His first appearance on the stage was in a London musical comedy in 1923. But his real love is for the

WHAT NAME, PLEASE?

THE names given below are those of men and women who are featured in the coming programmes from the New Zealand national stations or of radio performers who have been featured in the news during the week. On these pages are paragraphs relating to the activities of the persons mentioned in this column.

REGINALD DIXON, cinema organist, from 3YA, Thursday, April 25.

GEORGES ENESCO, conductor, from 3YA, Sunday, April 21.

JOHN COATES, tenor, from 1YA, on Friday, April 26.

The Rt. Hon. **STANLEY BALDWIN**, M.P., lecturing on the "English Character, from 1YA on Tuesday, April 23 (St. George's Day).

MARION ANDERSON, contralto, from 2YA, Sunday, April 21.

HARRY HEMSLEY, child impersonator from 2YA, Monday April 22.

CHARLES COBORN, veteran comedian, from 4YA, Saturday, April 27.

THE SHEFFIELD CHOIR, from 4YA, Thursday, April 25.

DENNIS NOBLE, baritone, from 2YA, Wednesday, April 23.