

Speak Again . . .

By
EMILE

objects of life is, first, perfection. . . ."

AND after Tolstoi came a voice that I had heard as a child and since then had forgotten. But it brought back a picture to my mind of a stuffy theatre in a small town and a stout man of fair complexion who spoke from the stage to a worshipping New Zealand audience.

"Fellow citizens," said the voice, "the British Empire holds 460 million people of all races, creeds and colours. These people, like ourselves, glory in the British Empire and its fundamental principles of justice and independence."

That voice belonged to William Massey.

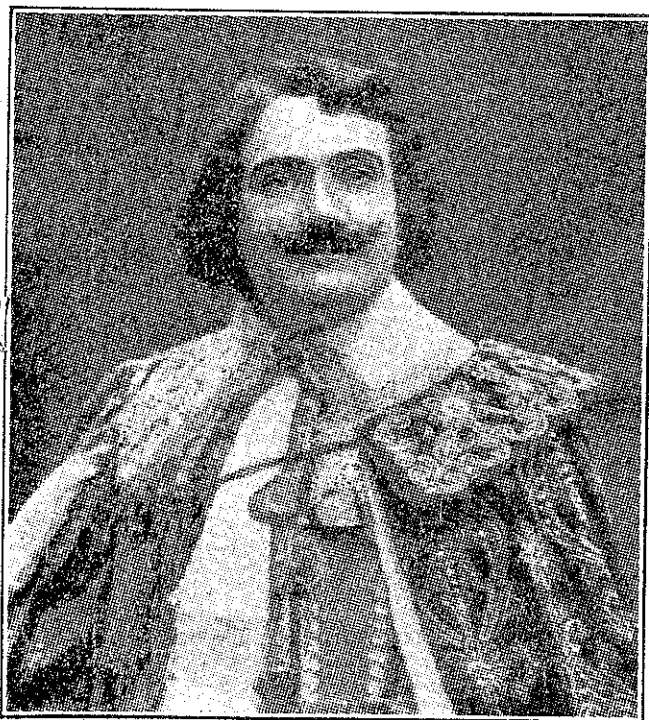
STRAIGHT after the talk on the fundamental principles of justice in the Empire came, ironically enough, the voice of a woman which said clearly, firmly and with a sort of quiet aggression, that the reasons why women should have the vote were obvious to every fair-minded person. It was a voice speaking just a few hours after it had been released from being shut up in jail in 1909.

It stirred up memories of tales of policemen assaulted with hatpins, of women haranguing men in the streets, of the not so funny jokes in "Punch" and of the tragedy of a woman who threw herself to death under the feet of the King's racehorse as the horses thundered down the straight. This was the voice of Miss Christabel Pankhurst.

"Museum Pieces"

AT the NBS they call these recordings "museum" pieces. To me it seemed more like a biological collection. There was too much life still imprisoned in these wax discs for them to belong to a museum.

I found that the curator of this museum at the NBS is constantly collecting. He even collects the voices of living people who talk to-day, and carefully tickets them and stows them away. Your own children in 40 years' time will be listening to one recording of a voice that I heard last week, and wondering. They will hear this voice say:—



CARUSO

. . . Defeats the silence of the grave.

"My father has for the last few years spoken to his people at Christmas time. Only two months ago he broadcast his last Christmas message. . . . I know how in the Dominions and in India and in the colonies the bond of loyalty to the Crown has been strengthened by the tie of passionate devotion to my father. . . . The example set by King George lays on me, his successor, a solemn trust to remember those associations. . . . It now falls on me to succeed him and to carry on his work."



TETRAZZINI

. . . Will sing from "Rigoletto."

That voice was to make another speech before many months had passed, taking farewell of its subjects.

THE curator told me how he had built up his museum.

Every now and then, the gramophone companies would send round word that certain numbers on their catalogues would no longer be republished. They were, taking no more pressures from their original matrices, of the recordings. When the companies notified the NBS some four years ago of this, the service realised the value of the records in the future. They got as many as they could.

"The actual value of some of those records to-day is hard to estimate in cash. That one you are holding," said the curator, "would probably fetch £20 in cash."

I put it down again.

Its Collection

NOW that it has its own recording plant, the NBS is able to add to its collection whenever noted men visit New Zealand. The service missed getting the voice of Bernard Shaw when he was in the Dominion because the recording plant was not then set up.

But it has the voice of Ivan Menzies singing the Oxford Group rally song in Wellington, not otherwise heard on recordings. And it has a collection of the voices of famous All Blacks and Springboks. It is building up its museum for the future.

IT is 50 years since the phonograph was invented, and some of these museum pieces vividly recall the "Edison record!" announcement of those old days and the jolly, though not particularly musical, sounds that came out of the large cardboard horn.

Even so, it is something very wonderful to be able to hear the peerless voice of Tetrazzini still singing "Cara Noine" from "Rigoletto"; the voice of Lillian Nordica, who toured New Zealand just before 1914, singing the "Omaha Indian Tribe Song" and "Mighty Like a Rose," and the voice of Klauser singing the "Laughing Song."

FILM-GOERS will remember a recent film, "Here's to Romance" in which an old lady, Madame Schumann Heink, "stole the picture" from the new tenor, Nino Martini, singing and playing in the film when she was 85 years old. In the NBS museum there is a record of her voice in its prime, singing a magnificent duet with Caruso.

The voice of Sir Ernest Shackleton, was silenced in his throat when he died on board his ship, the Quest, in 1922, while nearing the Antarctic. (Cont. on page 41.)