

This Week's Special Article

"Song Agency" Racket Bleeds New Zealand Writers

THIS is the story of a racket, written for amateur poets and composers who read the classified advertisement columns. It has the virtue of being in a general sense not only true, but fairly representative of a state of affairs out of which a number of unscrupulous firms have made hundreds of thousands of pounds throughout the world.

Mrs. X was something of a lyric poet. Like most people in New Zealand she was unfamiliar with ways by which her talent could be turned to account, and half a dozen songs reposed in her writing desk which, she was confident, would make a hit if only she could get in touch with a composer to put the words to suitable music and a publisher to arrange printing.

One day she read in her daily newspaper an advertisement like this:

There's Money in Song Writing! Send us your manuscript and, free of charge, we will advise you on its merits. Hundreds of thousands of songs are required every year for radio, stage and screen. YOU may be the author of the next BIG HIT. Send your song to the XYZ Agency for free advice!

There seemed no harm in sending the manuscript under such conditions. Mrs. X typed it and posted it, and waited. . . . A week later the XYZ Agency wrote saying that the song was eminently suitable for publication and was being forwarded to America for further consideration. Mrs. X was

There are no doubt "song agencies" who act in the best interests of their clients, but there are also "song agencies" whose activities are nothing more or less than a racket. Before lyricists or composers forward one penny to such a concern they should check its bona fides. This article tells them how and why.

elated—anxious about the verdict, and eagerly awaited the opinion of the Big American Agent to whom the manuscript had been sent for comment.

In the course of time back came the reply. Yes,

Mrs. X's song "had got what it takes." One or two trivial technical faults had to be corrected by the office, for which it was necessary to make the nominal charge of two dollars, but otherwise the lyric was really excellent. Would Mrs. X care to have her song set to music by a successful composer? This could be arranged by payment of a small retaining fee, 20 dollars, which could be forwarded by return mail to expedite publication.

Greatly excited by having her words set to music by a famous composer, Mrs. X forwarded the 22 dollars to defray expenses to date and in due course received a receipt and a letter stating that the song was now ready to be tried out over the air. The agency had arranged with a broadcasting station to put over the number at an early date and to analyse public response. The artist could be engaged, under special contract with the radio station, for the trifling sum of 25 dollars—which the agency would be glad to receive by return mail to expedite bringing the song to publication stage.

But by now Mrs. X was getting a little tired of paying out trifling sums. Twenty-five dollars was a lot of money. And so, alas, another lyric, which would have set Broadway whistling and stamping its feet died an obscure death for want of twenty-five dollars!

Other countries have long since been awake to the activities of song-writing "agencies" that
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In the Wake of the Week's Broadcasts

New feature of the commercial stations that should be sure of success is "Tony Wons' Scrapbook," which has been coming about 11 o'clock in the morning from all ZB's except Dunedin.

HOMELY TALKS THAT GO OVER.

Actually there is nothing very substantial about this feature—it is just a soft-voiced American talking "uplift" and reading poetry. All the same! he does it so persuasively that, blow me, if you don't start thinking that flies never fall into ointments anyway! Sooner or later you realise that, of course, they do. But Tony Wons

has been a pleasant little narcotic while he lasted. He'll get along, will Tony!

Though anyone who might say that Mr. Douglas Cresswell's first recorded talk on "Famous New Zealand Estates," given from 4YA the other Friday night, was uninteresting, would be talking stupidly.

RECORDINGS ARE A BLESSING TO LISTENERS I was, nevertheless, conscious of a feeling of disappointment. It was just a vague feeling, and I could not quite lay my finger on the cause of it. I think, maybe, I expected a more gen-

eral history of the families concerned, rather overlooking the fact that the talks deal with estates. However, we will let that go. I did feel somewhat grateful to the NBS for recording the talk, and recording it excellently, too. I liked the speaker's voice, and I liked his concise and entertaining manner of putting his subject across. The recording of such speakers is a thing for which the NBS gets little praise, and listeners should be more widely grateful. There was a time when far-off listeners missed worthwhile talks. Now, only rarely.