

# APPLAUSE THAT WAS SWEETEST

*Quiet Voice of Toscanini  
Meant Most of All To  
Alexander Kipnis*

By  
"EMILE"

**A**LEXANDER KIPNIS stood in the bow of the piano in the Wellington Town Hall last week acknowledging the sustained applause of an audience that did not want to let him go. Alone, on a bare stage, in a great ice-chest of an ugly building, he had held his audience rapt for two and a half hours by the magic of his artistry.

They had heard him sing the charming little songs of Brahms, the diabolic courting song of Mephistopheles in "Faust," Russian folk-songs that spoke strangely of the joys and sorrows of the peasants, and the rich gem of "The Gentle Lady" aria from Mozart's "Don Giovanni."

The applause rattled unceasingly from the front stalls, the pit and the circle. He seemed pleased with the response to his art, smiled, sang a quaint little modern song for them.

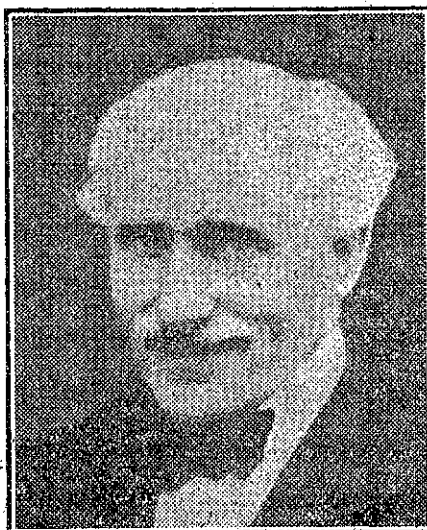
**B**UT I knew that, of all the applause he had received in every part of the world, there was nothing dearer to him than the memory of a small man with brilliant eyes who, after hearing him sing a duet with Lotte Lehmann, had remained silent for a long half-minute, had at last taken his hands from his puzzled eyes, and murmured very softly: "How beautiful this music was!"

The little man was Toscanini.  
"... The greatest conductor who has ever lived," Alexander Kipnis told me. "I do not think there will ever be another as great as he. When you are singing with him you seem to lose your respect for all the others in the world. He can be so simple and he can be so touched by music."

**T**OSCANINI, says Kipnis, is devoted to Wagner "like nobody," but he does not like Fascist countries. He gives up conducting in any country which turns Fascist.

When Austria was taken by Germany he immediately gave up conducting for the Festival at Salzburg.

"I, too," said Kipnis, "gave up Salzburg."



TOSCANINI.

"... He stroked my cheek."



—Photo by Spencer Digby.

ALEXANDER KIPNIS.

... New Zealand study of the famous basso.

**"W**HEN one man raises his arm in conducting, it means nothing, but when Toscanini makes a movement it means everything."

"When he is conducting he draws the music from the singer. There is no resistance. It is like a physical touch, some magnetism. ... He will come to conduct an orchestra of 120 people in Vienna and an enormous chorus, and they follow him like people in a fairy tale."

Alexander Kipnis paused, and then summed that all up in a striking phrase:

"When he is there, everybody's heart is beating much louder."

**A**LEXANDER KIPNIS smiled happily at a recollection. It had been after a rehearsal for a festival and he himself was standing outside the theatre. There were many people waiting there. Toscanini came out to get in his car. On the pavement stood Kipnis, taking a moving film of the conductor entering his car. Toscanini saw him, stepped out of the car and bowed.

"Then he called me over, and in the presence of everybody he gently stroked my cheek."

**C**HALIAPIN was in Salzburg, too, last summer, and one knew then, says Kipnis, that he would never sing again. One could read in his face that he was going to die. The two men had sung together often. And, though some might say that Kipnis rivals Chaliapin, there was no hint of this in his tribute:

"I consider him the greatest operatic singer and actor who has ever lived. Nobody at the present time can be compared with him."

"He was a human being in the fullest sense of the word. He had all the greatness that Nature can give to a human being, and all the weaknesses."

"Tolstoi once said, 'Show me a human being like an angel, and I am going to hate.' (Contd. on page 30.)