

HE SANG HYMNS TO LIVE

By
WILTON BAIRD

*Land Agent Brought Hymns To
Radio When The Land Bubble
Burst In American Depression.*

AN old man, nicely dressed, wearing an overcoat, felt hat, suede gloves and polished boots, sat on a public seat in the small triangle of reserve land as I came out of the headquarters of the NCBS in Wellington. He sat quite still, with a blank look in his eyes.

In his gloved hands he held the pole of a banner that stood in the air so that people might read it, or not.

In front of him was another elderly man who wore spectacles and a grey moustache. He was bending forward while the pigeons delicately trod all round him and came up to peck at the food he held out in his hand.

ALL the time the trams and the motor-cars rushed along down the street and the people hurried by. The banner said: "What think ye of Christ?"

No Time to Think

THE old man in the overcoat did not move. He might have been sitting there for hours. The pigeons came up to the other elderly man to be fed. The trams and the people went on tearing down the street.

They didn't seem to have much time for thinking of anything at the moment except getting home from work.

PROBABLY on an ordinary week day I would have joined the crowd and hurried past, unnoticed as well, if I hadn't just been hearing a selection of music at the studio a moment before.

The selection was from the new NCBS feature now being broadcast from the four commercial stations under the title, "Hymns of All Churches."

"Hymns of All Churches" is heard at the four stations now at 8.45 each morning from Tuesdays to Fridays. It is to be heard on Sundays as well.

On the week days, it seemed to me, it might well be like the banner of that old grey man; but a banner more artistically presented, with a quieter appeal, more in keeping with our ideas of everything in its right place, yet none the less challenging.

THE new feature is dropped in

to the morning session straight after breakfast when the rush of getting the men off to work is over and the women of the house can relax. It makes a moment's pause before the day's work is taken up again. Quietly and indirectly, in its own way, it asks the old man's question.

The hymns themselves—which cover almost every known religion, from Jewish to Roman Catholic—have been recorded in America by a singer named Emerson.

THERE his hymns, through the great American network, reached the ears of 19,000,000 listeners. They went on to Australia, where they have won a Commonwealth-wide audience. Now they have come to New Zealand.

In the States, over 200 country schools use "Hymns of All Churches" as their morning devotion.

"I SHALL never forget my first impression of Emerson," says an Australian visitor who saw him in the New York control-room. "Tall, distinguished, he was singing one of the hymns he loved and had taught millions the world over to love. As he sang, his head thrown back, his blue eyes sparkling, he appeared inspired."

Love For All Hymns

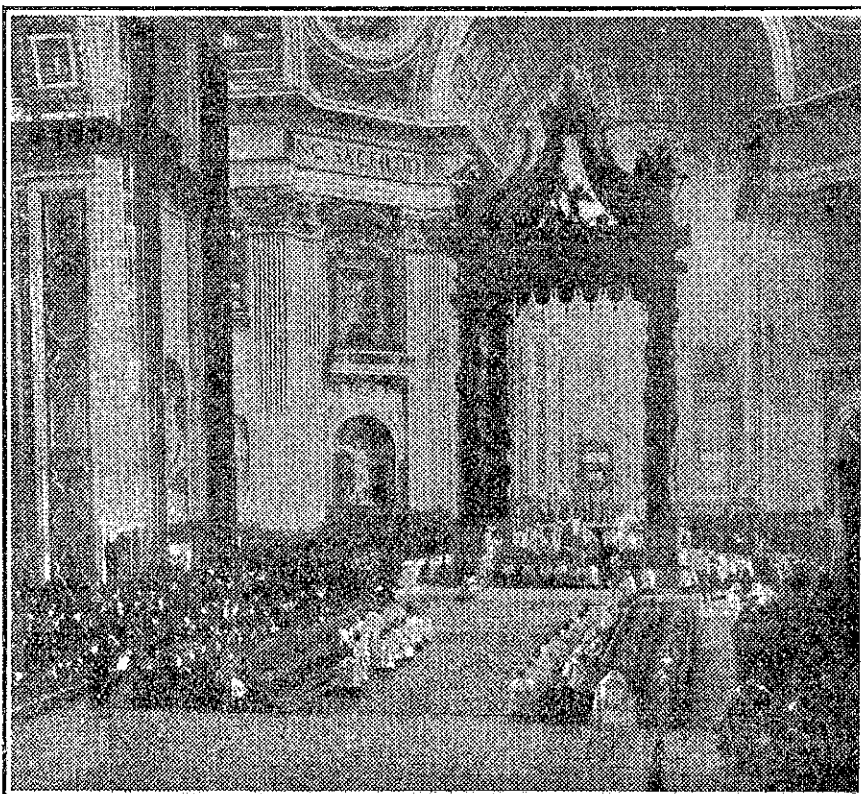
HE has a love for all hymns—old Protestant hymns and familiar Gospel melodies; dignified Latin chants a thousand years old and the simpler Catholic songs in English; Hebrew anthems that have come straight down from the Old Testament; the hymns of Wesley and the hymns of Mary Baker Eddy.

Even the negro spirituals, the hymns that these simple people made out of the great Bible stories, are included. There is one that Emerson and his choir sang that was sung in the famous negro play, "Green Pastures":

Old Ark she reel,
Old Ark she rock,
Old Ark she's sitting
on the
mountain top.

There is the slow, glorious music of "Come, Jesus, My Beloved," sung to the music of an old Italian master.

SINGER EMERSON'S life has been woven round the hymns that he (Cont. on p. 41.)



... The choir in the great church of St. Peter's in Rome