

The Week's RECORDS

IN THE WAKE OF THE WEEK'S ... BROADCASTS...

It is commonly believed that the lesser men of an age achieve popularity while the greater are comparatively unrecognized by the crowd. This belief has unquestionably had something to do with the tardy recognition of the worth of Sullivan's light opera music by some cultured musicians.

The Gilbert and Sullivan operas were so successful with the crowd that many earnest people jumped to the conclusion that Sullivan's music could have no lasting qualities. Of course they were all at sea as we now know. Several generations have persisted impenitently in whistling Sullivan's tunes in their bathrooms and the music lives on with a vigour that would dismay certain sour-faced highbrows of the '80's and '90's.

That the newly-recorded Gilbert and Sullivan selection by the New Mayfair Orchestra will be warmly welcomed goes without saying. Here are the titles of its dozen "whistlable" melodies from the cream of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. The titles on the record (H.M.V. C2964) are: Entrance of Ko-Ko, I have a Song to Sing O, Poor Wandering One, Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes, Three Little Maids, Dance a Cachucha, Ah, Must I Leave You, A Wandering Minstrel I, A Regular Royal Queen, Gavotte, If You Go In, and If That Is So.

Russian Haven

One of Rubinstein's most popular pieces is his "Kammenoi Ostrow, Op. 10, No. 22." This is one of a set of pieces named after an island in the Neva River, Russia. One writer gives us an excellent idea of the source of Rubinstein's inspiration.

He says: "Kammenoi Ostrow, or Kammenoi Island, lies in the Neva River, near St. Petersburg. Any afternoon in summer, if you walk to the farthest extremity of its pine-treed avenues, you can see Finland in the distance beyond a strip of sea, silvered under this clear Northern light. The delicate white chalets of the rich Petersburgers are set like pearls amid its greenness. Verdure and silvery lights are so rare in raw, blizzardly Russia that they make of this fitly a poetic spot, and when the chimes of the island bells break melodiously upon your ear you are ready to believe that Arcady is in Russia and not in Greece."

Orchestrated by Victor Herbert, "Kammenoi Ostrow" has been recorded by the Boston Promenade Orchestra, under Arthur Fiedler, (H.M.V. DB 119) and the result is most gratifying.

Wagner in Love

Many people hearing Wagner's famous "Traume" (Dreams) in any of its numerous arrangements are unaware that it was originally a song. It is one of a set of five which he composed to the words of Matilde Wesendonk. Included in this little group is "In Treibhaus" (In the Hothouse). A halo of romance surrounds the composition of these songs because the words were by the young wife of a generous patron of the composer.

With this lady, Wagner fell deeply in love. This hopeless passion for a high-minded and attractive woman in her twenties "sought appeasement in the furthering of each other's earthly happiness," to quote Wagner's own words.

A recording of the two songs by the Wagnerian soprano, Maria Muller, has placed within the reach of all a memento of this idyll on a Zurich hilltop. The lovely quality of Maria Muller's voice, the fine accompaniments of Ivor Newton, and the excellent recording make this disc (H.M.V. DB 3256) well worth adding to the library.

SPEAKING with no adornment, in a plain, forthright manner that seemed to match his job, Mr. R. B. Cooper told a tale of "Christmas in the Light-house" in an interview from 2YA last week.

The interview was capably handled by an interlocutor who did not obtrude, but just, as it were, turned on the tap of Mr. Cooper's reminiscences at the right times. The ex-lighthouse man had much that was curious and intriguing to tell of the life on places like the Brothers and Stephens Island; spoke of making Christmas toys from match-boxes when the Matai could not call in time with gifts for the children; told listeners, too, about the famous dry-land frogs of Stephens Island and the ancient and honourable tuatara lizard that will nest in burrows with petrel doves and mutton birds, all parties being quite at home. There was almost a Garden of Eden atmosphere about his stories of these places, so close to us and yet so far away. It was all most interesting, informative and unusual.

One of the heaviest spells of rain, hail, thunder and lightning that have hit Christchurch for many years, made radio listeners tremble for the masts and equipment of the radio stations last week.

A TIE-UP WITH THE STORM Enterprised was shown at 3ZB. Through Ursula Calson, the station presented an excellent tie-up—a feature under the title "Through a Window Pane." Starting with an organ solo, "The Storm" came recordings, "Stormy Weather," "Isn't it a Lovely Day?" "Riding Around in the Rain," "Raindrops," and "When Mother Nature Sings Her Lullaby." Whole feature was thoughtfully worked out and doubtless set at rest the mind of many a nervous child.

Something of a Kiplingesque touch was given by Major Lampen to his talk on "A Day in the Life of an Infantry Soldier," with its bugle calls and army verses, and all the detail so lovingly told by the man who is keen on his day's work. The major went through the day of an infantryman from Reveille to Last Post, the bugle calls were sounded in their appropriate places, and someone else sang the words the soldier puts to them. I found them singularly and almost incredibly refined. Perhaps we heard the revised version! One hopes the talk has been recorded for other stations.

I always feel grateful to 4ZD on a Wednesday night when I am at home to listen-in. That station takes me away from YA and ZB serials, which it is rarely my luck to hear in sequence, and gives me a "listener's night."

TWO MEN SING SILENT NIGHT For Wednesday is 4ZD's request night, and I have found that station's listeners have uncommonly good taste. I had a very pleasant night, indeed, on their last broadcast, many of my "star" items coming over, together with a recording

worth waiting for even if what had gone before had been dull. That was Paul Robeson singing "Silent Night." Robeson ranks high as a singer of popular songs, and after hearing him in this, he ranks higher still. I had not before heard Robeson in this number, but after having heard Bing Crosby sing it, I should say it's anyone's "game." But whereas Bing should have left the carol alone, it would have been a shame for Robeson not to have sung it.

"Thirty minutes with Noel Coward" on 2YA's programme last week made a bright patch, interesting none the less because one feels that Noel Coward's genius, like many bright flowers, was evanescent, a mood of the moment, and will fade almost as quickly as it bloomed. Best part was the staccato expressed dia-

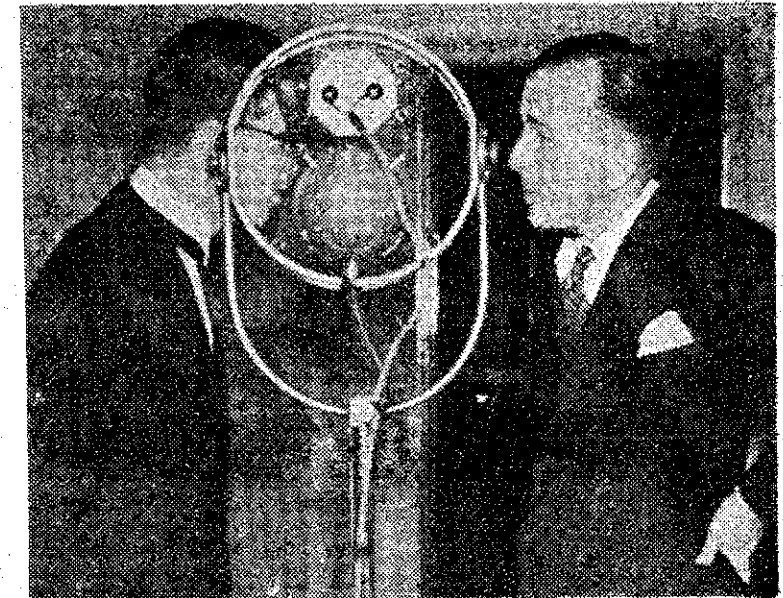
"CHINA?—IT WAS VERY BIG"

particular, but he delves into the history behind stamps, tells why this or that design was chosen, and enlarges upon the repercussions that have sometimes followed the issue of certain stamps. I no longer save stamps, but I enjoy listening to the talks, and I am certain any philatelist, however long his

the presentation, and consisting of modern and traditional items. Manner in which it was all put across allowed for interesting comparisons to be made between the two national types of song and music, as well as humour.

I wonder how many young stamp collectors listen in to the "Stamp Man," now appearing during the children's session from all the commercial stations, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The "Stamp Man" doesn't just potter along, getting nowhere in

MATERIAL FINE; VOICE POOR



THE AMAZING NOEL COWARD.—Is his work a bright patch doomed to fade? He is seen here (right) chatting with former BBC dance leader, Henry Hall.

logue scene from "Private Lives" with Gertrude Lawrence. "How was China?"—"Very big."—"And Japan?"—"Very small." I could have wished that "Mad Dogs of Englishmen" had been included.

"Impressions of the Holy City," in Teddy Grundy's travel session from 3ZB the other day, was one of the best things this widely-travelled announcer has yet done for the station. Mr. Grundy took listeners from the gateway of the Promised Land on a tour packed with interest, particularly at this time of the year. Linked up with the session was a fine musical programme, complete with descriptive matter.

For two Sunday nights running, 4ZM has contributed nobly to the gaiety of nations. On the first they gave a continuity programme from 8 till 10, "On the March," which consisted of marches, overtures and musical selections played by massed bands, wartime memories and patriotic songs, played and sung in stirring style, and a few miscellaneous pieces which just squeezed in under the heading. A thoroughly worth-while transmission to which I listened without interruption.

4ZM AIDS GAIETY OF NATIONS Ditto the next Sunday, when the same period was occupied by Irish and Scottish music and vocal numbers. This was a very well arranged programme, Irish and Scottish being well blended throughout

heard may be, must learn things of real interest through listening-in. I have only one complaint, the speaker has a very dull, colourless voice, and if his material wasn't good, he'd be hard to listen to. But one overlooks the voice in its revealing utterances.

Many months ago "Darby and Joan" did the rounds of the main stations of the NBS, and now the feature is reappearing on 4YO's schedules. For some reason or other, I did not hear a single presentation when 4YA handled it; I had a feeling the title did not appeal to me. I have heard two broadcasts from 4YO and have been quietly entertained. Apart from George Edwards's remarkable skill in so readily assuming different voices, the playlets (each complete) do not possess any distinctive clever touches, but they cover incidents familiar in the lives of most of us, or the "lives of somebody we know." There is no greater enjoyment in life than observing the reactions of people caught up by the machinations of fate in interludes in which we ourselves have not shaped any too brilliantly when similarly entrapped, and because this seems to be the underlying theme of the "Darby and Joan" stories, it is not hard to understand why they were so generally popular when previously presented, nor why they have been resurrected.

FAMILIAR IN MOST LIVES

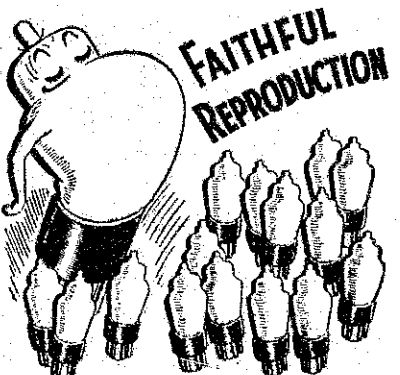
BOYS should be educated in the art of eating.—Mr. E. Bolton.

Co-operation in Administration.

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The Public Trustee

4/20.



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