

Songs of ALL TIME

Famous songs reflect their age, perhaps, but have as well the universal touch that makes them live on beyond their time. In this new feature, the "Record" will give some of these deathless songs of all languages, and tell their stories.

ABOUT the time of the Norman Conquest, there lived in Persia, a poet-scholar-mathematician-astronomer named Omar Khayyam. A piece of this poet's manuscript was seen by a middle-aged author named Edward Fitzgerald.

This Englishman, who was a college chum of the Tennyson brothers in their Cambridge days, was greatly interested in Persian poetry, and the sight of the manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford led him to render such a translation of it into English, that his name and the poet's will remain forever indissolubly linked together.

Here Fitzgerald's genius as a translator appears at its height. He possessed to an extraordinary degree the power of reproducing on his reader the effect of the original. In his "Omar Khayyam" this is remarkably true.

Published in 1859, the little book lay for months neglected, even by the translator's own friends, until Rossetti discovered it in the fourpenny box of a second-hand bookseller, and Swinburne proclaimed its genius to the world.

The poem, after a while, ultimately attracted very wide attention, but it was not until thirty-seven years after its original publication that a composer, Liza Lehmann, turned her attention to it, and made a song cycle of some thirty of its quatrains, under the title "In a Persian Garden."

The gem of this work for soprano, contralto, tenor and bass is unquestionably the tenor solo, "Ah! Moon of My Delight." At the first production of the work, at a private house, this solo was sung by the great Welsh tenor, Ben Davies. The other soloists were Mesdames Albani and Hilda Wilson, and David Bispham.

In the intervening forty-odd years tenors of all kinds have made this song their special favourite. The verses have been transformed by the composer's art into one of the most idyllic love songs in modern music.

The words, together with the metric verse, are:

Ah, Love, could you and I with Fate conspire
To grasp the sorry scheme of things entire,
Would we not scatter it in bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire!

Ah, moon of my delight, that knows no wane,
The moon of heav'n is rising once again—
How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same garden after me—in vain.

And when thyself with shining foot shall pass
Among the guests star-scatter'd on the grass,
And in thy joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made one—turn down an empty glass!

Liza Lehmann's "Ah, Moon of My Delight" is one of the features in "Music at Your Fingerside," which will be heard at 3YA on Tuesday, January 24.

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

PERHAPS all members of Oppositions are less reticent than all Government members (but it is a long time since New Zealand has had a British M.P., who gave his opinion on foreign affairs so vigorously and wholeheartedly as Lord Strabolgi. He baulked at nothing in giving them, spoke on the air with the forthright vigour of a born fighter. First he was interviewed rather indifferently on Centennial affairs by 2ZB and later the same evening spoke on foreign affairs from 2YA. He did far better with a free hand on a subject that he knew intimately. Slight and almost traditional difficulty with his r's (c.f. Wodehouse characters), gave piquancy to his remarks. Curious and unjustified rumour that he had been cut off was due to well-known NBS tendency to wait for the chimes without filling in gaps after items.

PEER WITH MIND OF HIS OWN—Station 3YA gave a fine coverage of the New Zealand Lawn Tennis championships at Wilding Park, keeping listeners in close touch with general progress, and broadcasting many of the later games, through the voices of prominent tennis players. Feature of the tennis programme was a description of the women's matches by Miss Margaret Beverley, ex-champion of New Zealand, who, through an accident while in Christchurch, was unable to take part. She performed nobly at the microphone, however, even if at first her voice was funeral and, in fact, she intoned! This was due to lack of experience. No doubt the broadcast was perfectly correct in a technical sense, but, oh, at first, it was mournful. In the end, she warmed up in spite of herself, and turned on all the excitement of a racing announcer as the horses go past the post.

FIRST SHE WAS FUNERAL—Waiting up to hear the NBS re-broadcast from Australia between 11.15 and 1.35 p.m. of the H. G. Wells talk on "The World As I See It," I was not over-impressed. Mr. Wells dealt with his childhood, his adolescence and so on—a sort of radio autobiography. Better title for the talk might have been, "Mr. H. G. Wells, As I See Him." It is a pity that really eminent men rarely live up to listeners' expectations. But that may be a penalty of being great.

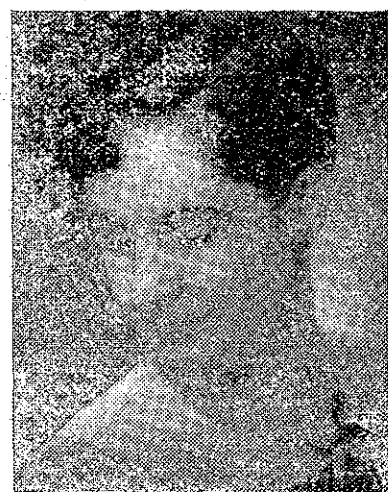
MR. WELLS AS HE SAW HIM—Success story of the week from 12B was the recorded broadcast of the Hihuharama Native School Choir at 8.15 last Thursday night. Totally unaccompanied, they sang Gruber's "Silent Night" with a delicacy and precision of time and attack that I have only heard bettered by the Comedy Harmonists. And yet, as the announcer of the continuity told me, they are a choir of 30 Maori boys and girls all between the ages of 10 and 15. They were trained by Mr. King, headmaster of the school at Ruatoria, on the East Coast near Gisborne. The choir also sang in

parts, the English folk song, "No John," and concluded with what was perhaps the gem of the whole performance—a Maori lullaby, "He Popo Ara He Oriori." I hadn't heard this particular lullaby before, but from the lucid continuity that went with the broadcast, was interested to learn that it is an ancient lullaby well known to the Maoris who arrived in the Horouta and Takitimu canoes. If this broadcast was the first time people not in the immediate district had heard the names of Hihuharama and Hihuharaha, which are both somewhere out of Gisborne, this school choir certainly looks like putting both of them on the map of the world.

News that the adventures of "The Japanese Houseboy" and his employer, the Hon. Archie, will terminate from 4YA on February 10 will doubtless be received with mixed feelings by listeners. One of the longest-lived serials given from any station, "The Japanese Houseboy" has also been one of the most abused. At the same time the feature has had a very big following, and although there may be more rejoicing than regrets, it is certain there will be

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—Spencer Digby photo.

ADELINE McGRATH.—She has been 4YA's programme organiser for the past five years, has now resigned from the NBS to get married.

many regrets. "The Japanese Houseboy" will be superseded by "The Rich Uncle From Fiji." 4YA has several interesting serials listed for presentation in the near future. On February 1, the first instalment of "Westward Ho!" will be heard; February 15 will introduce "The Strange Adventures of Mr. Penny," while "The Life of Emile Zola" will begin on March 22.

Particularly enjoyed a half-hour I tuned into 2ZB the other Sunday night. At about 6.30 came the first session of a new feature which will be presented regularly by Barend Harris (bass) and Reg Morgan (baritone). They call it "Songs of All Nations," and they began with songs of Russia. For the most part they were simple folk songs, but they all had the irresistible appeal Russian music has had for me ever since I first heard a record of the Don Cossacks. Barend Harris sang the beautiful "Black Eyes," Glinka's "Midnight Revue" (which is not, as I hope you do not imagine, the theme song of a motion picture, but a very dramatic description of the parade of a ghostly army); and finally, the hackneyed "Volga Boatman." Reg Morgan sang "My Dearest" and a ballad about the

SONGS OF ALL NATIONS

such a contrast to the nasal "wit" of so many American comedians. And when two or more Hulberts appear together, I revel in those little side "digs" all through the item. The Hulberts are more typically English than any other English comedians; and even better, they know what to sell the public and how to sell it.

brown eyes of his Doushka. I particularly enjoyed Mr. Harris's fine bass voice, of which we hear all too little. This programme was followed a little later by a short piano recital by Eric Bell. The pieces he played were all light and modern, ranging from a little Finnish folk song to a waltz from "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." I would like to reiterate what I said about Mr. Bell's talent being wasted on stuff of this sort, but I am glad to say he is varying his programmes considerably and giving us something better every now and then. In fact, from the way he switches from jazz to classics, I imagine Mr. Bell must be that almost fabulous person, a middlebrow.

A good many listeners to 3YA recently have fallen into a trap certainly not set by the station, but by an artist—Jack Freeny (Irish tenor) in his series of "Songs of Old Ireland."

DECEIVED MANY LISTENERS

Quite a big fan-mail has arisen, listeners being unaware that Freeny's work is recorded, that he does not make a personal appearance at the studio. So faithful are his reproductions that I, too, was certain the other night that the tenor was in the studio, and being accompanied by the Christchurch pianist, M. T. Dixon. The station authorities will send on all fan letters to the gramophone company in the hope that they will reach the artist.

I could hardly believe my ears the other day when I heard a 2ZB announcer lending a vocal refrain to records he was playing. In my opinion this is never very desirable, and when the announcer has an execrable voice, as this particular one had, it is unpardonable. I am always in a quandary when I hear something over the air which I object to strongly. My first inclination is to hurl something at the radio, my second to rush to the phone, ask for the announcer urgently, and proceed to tell him what I think of him. I usually curb both, but in future I think I shall count a hundred, and if I still feel mad, then rush to the phone. In the meantime, I shall add announcers singing with records to the aversion I have to people barking and bullying me at the opening of radio serials.

IT ALMOST PASSED MY BELIEF—Listening in to Win and Windle, radio entertainers from Australia, who opened their NBS tour at 2YA last week, I remembered all the anguished cries of radio men that humour on the air is the hardest thing to get in the world. And to my mind, although they had their moments, Win and Windle didn't quite get it. On the other hand, I have no doubt many listeners loved it all, and will be very busy next week writing in to tell me I am wrong. Or am I not?

The Hulberts—Jack, Claude, and Cicely (Courtneidge)—entertained in 30 minutes of delectable foolery from 4YO recently, and I sat back with my feet on the chiming clock, enjoying myself.

WE CAN'T ALL BE RIGHT

I admit it—I do enjoy the Hulberts; they are all three bright and breezy, and such a contrast to the nasal "wit" of so many American comedians. And when two or more Hulberts appear together, I revel in those little side "digs" all through the item. The Hulberts are more typically English than any other English comedians; and even better, they know what to sell the public and how to sell it.

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