

# BRITTEN MADE FREEMAN

On Saturday morning the Worshipful Company of Musicians presented the freedom of their company to Mr. Benjamin Britten. The ceremony took place in a Court of Assistants held at Cliveden, the home of Lord Astor, who is Master of the company. The choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, sang two groups of vocal music including Britten's *Hymn to St. Peter*, which the composer conducted, and Arne's "Rule, Britannia", which had its first performance at Cliveden in the garden theatre 225 years ago.

Lord Astor contrasted the conflict of opinions in his court, and the narrow, "almost Wilsonesque" majorities obtained on motions, with the unanimity and warmth that resolved to give Mr. Britten the company's freedom. He drew attention to Britten's achievements in the Aldeburgh Festival, to the Christian appeal of his music, and the spirit of reconciliation and international friendship to which his whole way of life bore witness. Lord Astor then presented Mr. Britten with the freedom of the company, symbolized for practical usefulness in the form of a desk blotter.

Mr. Britten, in his reply, observed that he was a nationalist in his musical roots and residence though his other sympathies were naturally international. He acknowledged his musical parents as Orlando Gibbons, Dowland, Bridge, and Holst, and claimed as a constant influence on his work the inspiration of English poetry.