

FORECAST FOR MONDAY NEXT

BE on your guard next Monday morning. It is not, as the astrological almanacs would put it, a good day for business; it is one day in the year when many people discover the essential truth of the old cynicism, "Save me from my friends." Converse with caution, open your mail with circumspection, run errands for no one. For if you do, the odds are slightly better than two-to-one that you will find yourself an April Fool. If you are among Scots, they will call you a gowk (which is simply the Doric for cuckoo); if you are the sport of the Free French, or the literati, you will be labelled a *poisson d'avril* (which is a very poor fish whichever way you look at it.)

Just how April Fools' Day came about we have not been able to trace. All we have found out is that it is a relic of those once universal festivities held at the spring equinox, starting on old New Year's Day, March 25, and ending on April 1. Its influence is widespread, for the Indians know all about it. At the feast of Huli, the last day of which is March 31, the chief amusement is fooling people by sending them on fruitless errands.

Like Guy Fawkes' Day, November 5, April Fools' Day in New Zealand has lost a lot of its popularity. Queuing up for cigarettes, or the week-end bread and meat, and making up annual balances by March 31, leave no time for the preparation of elaborate hoaxes. The day is observed mostly by innocent young brothers and office boys—if there are such innocents in 1946—who send their friends for tins of striped paint, or try to persuade them that if they wait long enough, some public statue will descend from its pedestal.

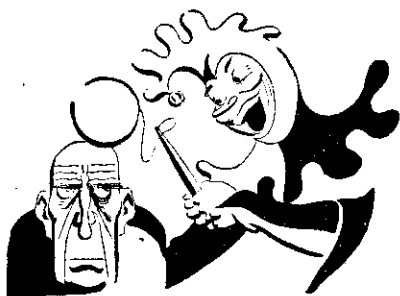
A Great London Hoax

Adults once made much of April 1 in England and Scotland. Records show that a huge hoax was carried out in London in March, 1860. Thousands of people received official-looking cards by post. They bore the following announcement: "Tower of London—admit bearer and friend to view the annual ceremony of washing the White Lions, on Sunday, April First, 1860. Admitted only at White Gate. It is particularly requested that no gratuities be given to the Wardens or their Assistants." The trick succeeded—surprising as it may seem today. Thousands of cab-loads of people spent the greater part of the morning looking for the mythical white gate.

Are You a Mason?

One of the best April 1 frauds in New Zealand was when reporters were told of an important gathering in a southern city. They were informed that there would be several well-known speakers at an unusual ceremony. On arrival they found themselves at a Masonic convocation in full session.

What compound is to simple interest, Scottish is to English April fooling. The Scot is not content to make a neighbour



believe in some single piece of absurdity. In Scotland the object is to fool friend MacStiggins completely. Wag No. 1 sends him with a letter to a friend some distance away, professedly asking for some important information, or requesting the loan of some article. But in reality the letter contains the words:

This is the first of April;
Hunt the gowk another mile.

Wag No. 2 picks up the idea, tells Mac that it is not in his power, etc., and bustles him off to Wag No. 3. If Mac is not spry enough, he carries on till somebody with a kinder heart lets him into the joke.

But we will hear more about April Fools' Day if we listen to 2YA at 7.15 p.m. on the day itself, when there will be a talk written by Fred Usher, of Hobart.

A Gift That Vanished

In the past the ZB stations have introduced some bright fooling into April 1 programmes. One morning listeners were informed that a certain firm would leave a sample of cream in letter boxes. Residents rose bright and early and hopefully, to find nothing. Many rang the station to complain and were told that the announcer had forgotten to mention that it was vanishing cream. And, anyhow, it was the first of April.

By way of stretching realism to the utmost one station announced that it had received from America a record which gave scent as well as speech and music. It was about a prairie flower which could actually be smelled if the listener got close enough to the loud-speaker. One elderly woman rang to say how marvellous modern inventions were; she really thought she could get a whiff of the flower, which took her back to her childhood days. Another leg-pull concerned television. A station told listeners to place a mirror on top of their receiving sets with a piece of silk over the glass. If they dimmed their lights and carefully removed the silk after a suitable interval, they would see an image. They did—their own faces. What the ZB's propose to do on Monday next we have not been told, but something may be cooking.

Artificial Limbs

A COMPLETELY unfounded rumour is again current that one of New Zealand's tobacco companies will provide artificial limbs for those who need them in return for stated quantities of empty cigarette packets. Apart from the fact that there is no truth whatever in the rumour, there is a law expressly providing that empty cartons or packets cannot be exchanged for articles of any description.

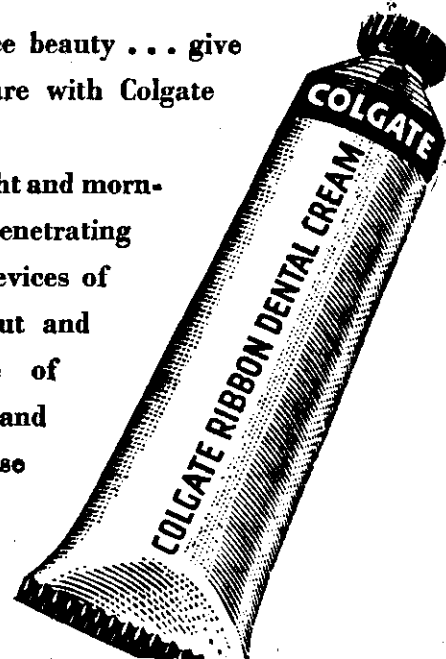
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as a
picture ..



but a failure in a close-up

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