

Written for "The Listener" by
B.P.

—this in spite of the fact that the feeling of eeriness and suspense was lost after the first hearing of the play.

Halls and Roads

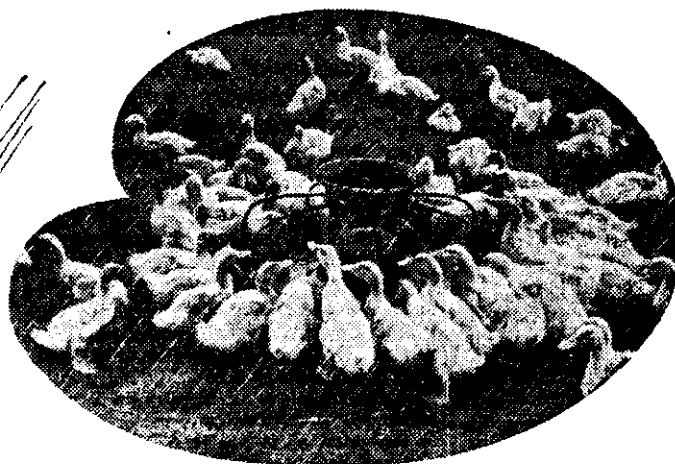
A tour of this kind is no profit-making venture, a fact for which luckily we were prepared from the moment the producer first thought of it. We had done some fairly expensive advertising, including press and screen announcements and a preliminary trip over the proposed route by the producer and business manager, who examined stages and made contacts with local drama groups and hall committees. For the halls we had to pay rents varying from £1/10/- to £3/10/-, and copyright fees for the six performances amounted to £26. This is one obvious reason why so few companies, either professional or amateur, visit any but the larger towns. Another is the state of most roads apart from the main highways. Even the main Central Otago Highway is in many places badly corrugated and appallingly dusty. Those who travelled in the back of the truck emerged most days yellow from head to foot, hoarse-throated and sore-eyed. The secondary roads were even worse, and seemed to us to be the one, but great, disadvantage of life in the beautiful districts of Hawea or Taras.

Our time was strenuously filled during those 10 days. Once we played two consecutive nights in different towns, another time three nights in succession, and always between performances we had to clear one hall, pack stage properties and personal belongings, travel, often cook our own meals, unpack, set up a new stage, re-press curtains and costumes, and play again. And all over again the next day.

Thus the tour gave us neither personal profit nor a "thorough holiday"; but we did gain new experiences, new scenes, new acquaintances, excitement and suspense and adventure of a kind, and above all a sense of achievement, of doing something that was worth doing as well as being pleasant and interesting to do.

Oak Leaves and Laurels

AFTER the bad reception that Sean O'Casey's play *Oak Leaves and Lavender* received when it was first produced last May, the recent success with London audiences of Noel Coward's *Peace in Our Time* should give some consolation to those critics who have been croaking that British drama, too, is in the doldrums. Like O'Casey's play (which is about the inhabitants of a Devon village during the Battle of Britain), *Peace in Our Time* also describes wartime Britain, but it is an imaginary Britain, occupied by the Nazis, but, by presenting a conquered English, Coward has, with some clever psychological writing and heavy sentiment, created a play to rival the present success of American-produced plays in London theatres.



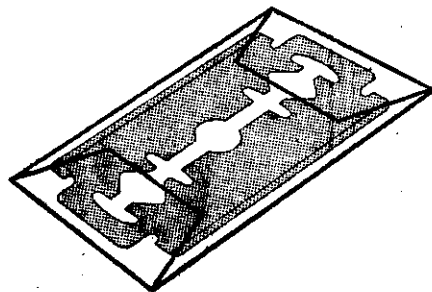
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