

# SILLY SEASON

(By Airmail — Special to "The Listener")

DECEMBER 15

AFTER days of the worst fog London (and western Europe) has had for years, followed by howling winter gales, I have had to remind myself that it is not cold and grey on the other side of the world, and that it will be lazy summertime when this letter is read. Therefore I confine myself to the short items, the odds and ends of passing interest, not too remarkable, that will as well serve to be a tent over the face of someone asleep in a deck-chair as to be read beside a radio that keeps interrupting itself for races or bowls or cricket. \* \* \*

A JUVENILE offender was ordered last week by a woman magistrate to go home and take off the Old Pauline's tie which he was improperly wearing. The *Manchester Guardian* reminds associations which are determined that their colours shall be worn only by members that they have an easy remedy. Striped ties (such as the Old Paulines wear) are easily copied, but a crested tie can be registered with the Patents Office for five years at a cost of 10 shillings, and only authorised suppliers can then sell them against a list of members supplied by the Association. Eton, Harrow and St. Paul's once had their ties sold against such lists, but nowadays have not bothered to keep the lists up to date. Hence presumably the appearance of one of them in court.

METEOROLOGISTS have been examining Wagner's operas and studying the weather conditions they describe. Cicely M. Botley writes in the November issue of *Weather* (the magazine of the Royal Meteorological Society) that in the *Valkyrie* there "seems to be a large depression somewhere out of the picture to the north-west, associated with sharp and rapidly moving troughs of low pressure." Jagged figures on the woodwind and strings, she says, give "a patter of cold-front rain." The Overture of *The Flying Dutchman* is a sound picture of "a deep depression over the North Sea with steep gradients, winds 8 or 9, and sea 6 or 7. The activity of the depression continues into Act I. There is a curious 'local' disturbance round the ghost ship in Act 3."

Even meteorologists get so bored they don't know what to do with themselves sometimes. \* \* \*

IT was left to *The Times* to do justice to the excellent news about the takahe. If ever a strange bird or beast does anything to draw attention to itself, *The*

*Times* will put it on record. Some months ago it was the bald-headed coot. Before that, it was the bristle-thighed curlew, which had been observed in its mating season for the first time (in Canada). Last spring, there was the "first cuckoo" in Hampshire which turned out to be an old man who explained that he "used to do the nightingale when he had his teeth in" and that "they always fall for it." In the last week or two there has been what most people resort to calling "that New Zealand bird," with a very small division of attention in favour of the elephant-snout fish. *The Times* gave us a full account of the event, and devoted a fourth leader to the history of *Notornis hochstetteri* ("it is a sign of an increasingly liberal and comprehensive conception of natural science that the birds just found were not converted into further dead specimens in a museum—or even living specimens in a zoo"). And the Natural History Museum has brought out from a cupboard its two stuffed takahe, which are 99 and 97 years old. \* \* \*



"A DEEP depression over the North Sea, winds 8 or 9 and sea 6 or 7"

idea seems to be to intimidate—not an unfamiliar technique of advertising where the product is not recognised to be indispensable—and to frighten (for instance) women with long noses into thinking that they should wear a hat that reaches forward, to make their noses less conspicuous. But still women persist in wearing the *mittel Europa* scarf or kerchief, which is warm, cheap, quick to put on, and very becoming.

Now the male sex is to be assaulted in the same way. Young men also are going hatless, and a Hatter's Information Centre is to be set up, and £25,000 a year for two years will be spent on persuading us: "If you want to get ahead, get a hat."

IN the same week in which it has been said in one of the newspapers that the Old Vic is fallen on bad times, and has difficulty in finding new plays of good quality, it is also announced that Shaw has written a new play, which will be put on at Malvern next year, if the festival there is revived; and T. S. Eliot has disclosed in Stockholm (where he

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