

THE MAILS GO THROUGH

And It Is Women Who Carry Them

By J. HALKET MILLAR

SOME months ago there was an argument about post-women in New Zealand. I don't remember what the result was, but research among records of the Post and Telegraph Department reveals that there are no fewer than 134 women regularly engaged in the transport of mails in this country.

Of these, 86 are married and 48 are single. They adopt an amazing variety of transport in their work. They go on foot, on bicycle, on horseback, in motor trucks, by car, launch, motor-cycle, dog cart, gig and trap, while there is one who pushes a hand-cart half a mile between the post office and the railway station.

It is possible, of course, that some of these women do the work as a hobby; some may do it because they would otherwise get no mail themselves; some because they have to cover the route in any case and find even a small emolument better than none at all. Whatever

the facts are, the figures can be read in *The New Zealand Gazette*.

For long distances the laurels go to the married women. There is one who drives a truck 86 miles once a week for £90 a year. Another travels 34½ miles a day in a motor-car. A third uses a horse and cart over a 16-mile journey twice a week.

Six days a week one woman carries the mails 18 miles a day. She is paid £55 a year for doing the work on three days, and on the other three she performs the service free of cost to the Government. For £60 a year a woman goes 12 miles once every day on a motor-cycle, while another's journey consists of a 20-mile run twice a week.

By Car and Horse

The records have it that the journey is done "by motor-car and sometimes by horse," which seems to indicate that the route lies over one of those northern backblocks roads where cars cannot travel in bad weather.

There are five of these women mail carriers who use only horses in their work. Twice a week one of these rides four miles a day, another rides 15 miles twice a week (for £15 a year), a third goes one-and-a-half miles twice a week. Of the others, one is paid £7 10s a year for taking the mails seven miles once a week, and the last one takes them on an eight mile journey three times every week.

Spartan blood must be in the woman who walks four miles every day, and in the one who walks two miles every day, each for £10 a year.

The shortest distance covered by a woman in this group is 160 yards, but the nature of that journey makes one ponder when it is learned that the contractor covers it "on foot and by boat." The longest run is one of 70 miles, covered once a week, and the woman does it in a launch.

Arduous Contract

What seems to be the most arduous contract is one undertaken by a single woman. She goes five miles a day on foot, and receives £18 a year. Another single woman goes the same distance every day on a bicycle, and is paid £7 16s a year. On foot one young woman twice a day carries her load of mails 500 yards, and another is paid £45 a year to take the mail safely over eight miles once a day.

On horseback a single woman contractor goes 42 miles once every fortnight, and there is another who rides 17½ miles every day for £37 a year.

It would be interesting to know something of the difficulties encountered by these women in the course of their work. Sunshine and storm, calm and gale, on they go. Does that launch ever break down on its 70-mile run? Are those horses always placid and easy-going? Think of the times chains must come off those bicycles, and of possible punctures on a wet night! But the mail goes through, and few of us think of the work some of those who handle the letters have to perform.

BRIDGE FOR THE BEGINNER

WOMEN, a cynic has observed, are divided into three categories — those who play bridge, those who don't play bridge, and those who will ultimately play bridge. Whether it is true or not, Christchurch women in the last two categories are being rapidly guided into the great majority by Mrs. Vera Ardagh, who conducts a weekly session from 3ZB for bridge beginners.

Radio lectures in contract bridge have long been a feature of American radio, and it has been proved that this is one of the most effective ways of teaching the game. Mrs. Ardagh, who is New Zealand representative for the Culbertson Studio, teaches the Culbertson Contract Bridge system. She received her Teacher's Diploma in 1939, and her Master's Diploma in 1940. She is the only person in the Southern Hemisphere to hold a Master's Diploma.

Contrary to popular belief, bridge is not a difficult game for the beginner — it is not so much brains as a concentration that is needed. Women, according to Mrs. Ardagh, are better players than men, but only because they have the time to devote to advanced study. No hard and fast rules can be laid down regarding the time it takes for a com-



Green & Hahn photograph
MRS. VERA ARDAGH
It depends on "card sense."

plete beginner to learn bridge; everything depends on the "card sense" of the pupil.

Mrs. Ardagh's session is heard from 3ZB on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at 3.15.

"FOR MY LADY"

The following are the Women's sessions for the week commencing February 9:

1YA, 10.20 a.m. Theme, Queens of Song.

Monday: Kirsten Flagstad.

Tuesday: "Your Cavalier," episode 3.

Wednesday: Galli-Curci.

Thursday: Lucretia Bori.

Friday: "Your Cavalier," episode 4.

Saturday: Jeanette MacDonald.

2YA, 10.40 a.m. Theme, "Famous Violinists":

Monday: Yehudi Menuhin.

Tuesday: Fritz Kreisler.

Wednesday: "Dombey and Son," episode 3.

Thursday: Jascha Heifetz.

Friday: Bronislaw Huberman.

Saturday: "Dombey and Son," episode 4.

3YA, 10.0 a.m. Theme, "Musical Miniatures":

Monday: Schubert.

Tuesday: "Martin's Corner," episode 3.

Wednesday: Amy Woodford-Finden.

Thursday: "Martin's Corner," episode 4.

Friday: Guy d'Hardelot.

Saturday: Vera Buck.

4YA, 11.0 a.m. Theme, "Let's Gossip to Music":

Monday: Interesting news facts with musical illustrations.

Tuesday: More interesting facts.

Wednesday: "Ernest Maltravers," episode 3.

Thursday: More interesting facts.

Friday: More interesting facts.

Saturday: "Ernest Maltravers," episode 4.

YOUR GARDEN AND MINE

By Ann Earncliffe Brown (No. 56)

I'VE a feeling that I'm just a little late in writing. However, if I tell you that I've been reading "How Green Was My Valley," by Richard Llewellyn, you will understand that I have been away among the Welsh collieries; have known the green valley so vividly painted by this Welsh writer and have grieved to see the creeping destruction of that valley by the piles of slag and mine refuse.

Wisdom there is in the book, too, for all who till the soil. Listen to this: "Want all, take all, and give nothing. The world was made on a different notion. You will have everything from the ground if you will ask the right way, but you will have nothing if not."

Sound Advice

And this brings me back to very sound advice given by one of you who grows tomatoes exceptionally well. This I know, for her outdoor ones were quite large, though still green and had developed rapidly. Her special gift to the tomato soil is a very liberal allowance of oyster shell dust—that valuable residue which any dealer in shell grit for poultry can supply. Dig it in deeply and thoroughly when you plant your young tomatoes, and a further dressing can also be given later. I have myself added fine chicken grit in the soil but the dust is more economical to buy and more readily available as plant food.

"You will have everything" also that you desire if you mix this same shell dust in the ground where your carnations

grow, and your dianthus too. All lime lovers will smile on your labours with this gift from the sea. Another hint from a friendly garden may prove useful to you, too. A short time ago readers were invited to suggest ways of enticing an equine hedge cropper to a certain troublesome quick fence. The difficulty seemed to be to make the hedge alluring but not too alluring. Knowing the comparative scarcity of horses, obliging or otherwise, I suggest that you stretch a garden line along the length of your hedge, and guided by the taut string make a splendid level top by the use of the prosaic but efficient hedge clippers.

Delight to the Eyes

Flowering hedges of unusual beauty in some of your gardens were a delight to the eyes. One of fuchsia (sheltered by palings but gaily overtopping these) was a joy to passers-by. A more serviceable but equally successful one was of manuka. Kept closely trimmed after the flowering period the hedge remains a close, compact growth.

If the most usually known white manuka is grown you can raise your seedlings yourself from seed gathered in the manuka scrub land. Young seedling plants are often quite successfully transplanted from these areas also, but some of the larger flowering whites, or those rarer rosy pinks to vivid carmines can be supplied by nursery men for hedging plants. Manuka asks little in the way of special soil preparation, and stands up to extremes of heat and cold.