

FARAWAY PLACES

NOW 125 years old, the annual boat race between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge is perhaps the most famous in the world. Thousands line the river to watch, many of them less for its interest as a sporting event than for the unique atmosphere generated among the spectators. Few ever catch more than a fleeting glimpse of the contestants, but the race ranks as one of the social events of the year.

Something of the excited but sociable air of the boat race crowd is recreated for listeners in one of a series of programmes by Bryan O'Brien, now being heard from Commercial stations. By the use of a dramatic interlude, Mr. O'Brien sketches at once the race he saw himself last year, and the tradition of the event, back to the days when "the coxswain always wore a silk hat with a curling brim."

Entitled *Faraway Places*, the new series of programmes covers the broad sweep of Mr. O'Brien's travels through Europe, from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Circle. In each episode, he contrives to tell not only the observations of the traveller, but something of the legend and history in which the Old World is steeped. In his story of "The Delectable Duchy" of Cornwall, for instance, he includes the legend of why the Devil refused to cross the river Tamar: "If ever I should cross over into Cornwall, the people would turn me into a pasty, as they do their fish, flesh, fowl, and all their good victuals." And at Hampton Court Palace, the traveller finds not only the tempting byways of the famous maze, but also some colourful byways of history. The Palace, it seems, was originally a priory of the Knights of St. John; then Wolsey acquired it and made it so magnificent that it aroused the cupidity of Henry VIII, who seized it and spent much time there with his several unfortunate wives.

Bryan O'Brien's ten-month, 34,000-mile European tour started, naturally enough, with the British Isles, his first stopping-off place from New Zealand. He deals with this part of the tour—England, Scotland and Ireland—in the early part of the series. Later, listeners will hear of journeys in stranger parts. The Continental journey begins at Gothenburg, in Sweden, from whence a visit is paid to the Lapp village of Jokkmokk, within the Arctic Circle. Here, the traveller stayed for two days and nights—in so far as they could be distinguished as such—in the earthen, igloo-like home of a Lapp family. In Norway, surprisingly, the New Zealander was most impressed by the mountains: "They are utterly unlike any mountains anywhere, and provide a few scenes more beautiful than anything I have ever seen." A trip is made to Finland, and then back across Sweden and Norway to Denmark, "a dainty Lilliput dancing and mocking two giant brothers." Germany follows, with descriptions of Oberammergau, scene of the famous Passion Plays, of Berchtesgaden, the mountain retreat of the late Adolf Hitler, of the valleys of the Rhine and the Moselle, and of many of Germany's great cities, now well advanced in reconstruction.

Faraway Places is being broadcast at 6.15 p.m. on Tuesdays by the four ZB stations and 2ZA. Bryan O'Brien is also giving a series of talks in the *Women's Hour* on Mondays from the ZBs, 2ZA and 1XH.

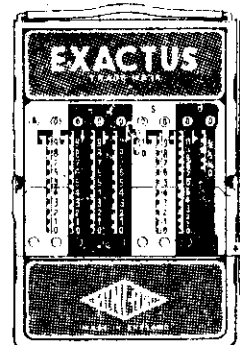
N.Z. LISTENER, JUNE 11, 1954.



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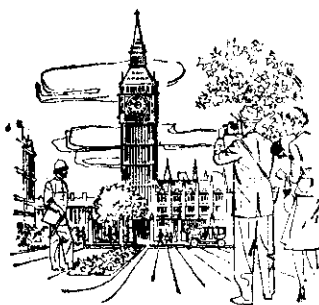


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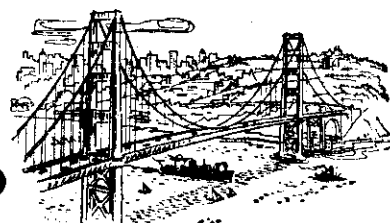
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