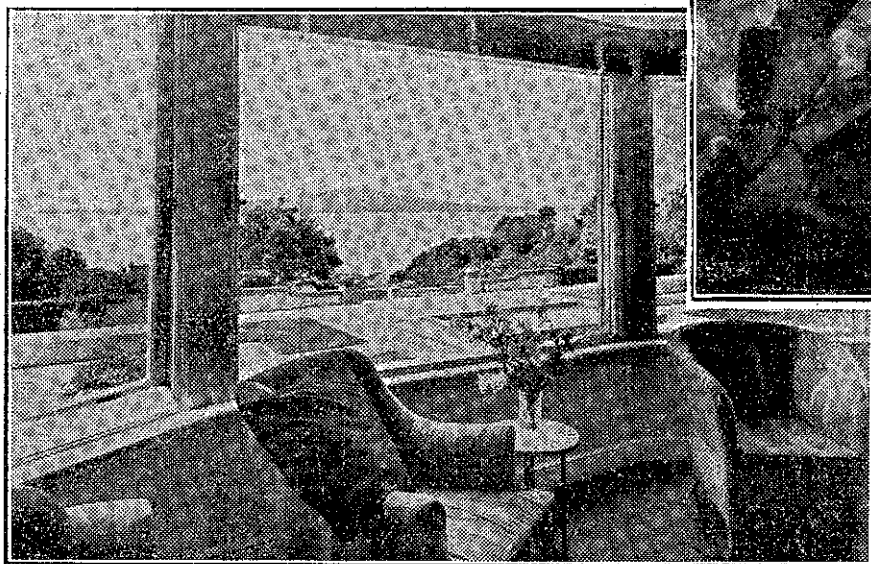


Women at Home

Former Girl Guide Commissioner and Her Lovely Home

Mrs. W. R. Wilson (right), one of the founders of the Girl Guide movement in New Zealand. Below is the view from the windows of Mrs. Wilson's drawing-room, looking across Auckland Harbour to Rangitoto Island.



when she returned from England a public meeting was called, and the Guide movement sprang into being and was joined by the Peace Scouts. From about 20 Guiders, 12 years ago, the number has increased to over 12,000 Guides. During those 12 years Mrs. Wilson has given herself wholeheartedly to the cause, spending most of the time at the headquarters in Auckland City. It is with great regret that due to her recent ill-health she has had to

"ST. LEONARD'S" is the stately name of the glorious home of Mrs. W. R. Wilson, of Auckland—14 acres laid out in sweeping lawns, shadowed by massive English trees, tennis courts, an Italian garden with cypress trees, mosaic ponds, statuettes, creeper-covered walls, terraces of native bush, ferneries, summer-houses and look-outs. A path leading from these, winds down to the beach far below, where there are private bathing sheds.

Mrs. Wilson was the former Chief Commissioner of Girl Guides in New Zealand. At the recent Guide rally in Auckland, to welcome Lady Baden Powell, the Guiders of the Dominion took the opportunity of expressing their affection and grateful thanks to Mrs. Wilson by presenting her with an old English silver coffee pot made in 1770 and a book concerning the history of the movement of Guiding in New Zealand. Mrs. Wilson was deeply touched with the gifts, especially the finely-bound book, the Auckland chapters of which had been printed and illuminated by a young girl who is going blind. This girl had begged the doctor to let her do this as her last work before losing her sight entirely. These chapters are beautifully executed with delicate colourings.

The Guide movement was started in 1923 after Mrs. Wilson had been to England and visited the Chief Guide with the object of founding the movement in New Zealand. Mrs. Wilson came to this decision after some business girls had come to her one evening to ask if she would help them to form a basketball team. They explained that no one seemed to take any particular interest in girls after they had left school, and as they had heard that she was interested in young people's welfare they thought she might help. Mrs. Wilson was pleased to help in any way she could and also invited them to come to her home once a week to read and sew. The "class" grew and one day a bookseller sent her a book on Girl Guiding which she felt had "dropped from heaven." The class grew too big for her home, so

give her work into other hands.

Having travelled extensively, Mrs. Wilson can give worth-while opinions on the state of affairs in many countries. Listening to her experiences in foreign lands is like reading an exciting travel book.

"I think travel is the world's greatest educator," she said when talking to a "Radio Record" representative. "I will give one or two instances. When in America I visited Salt Lake City. My conception of Mormons was that held by most people. I soon found that my ideas were entirely wrong. Since about the year 1876 Mormons have not had more than one wife. Previous to that time the number of wives was permissible because, due to the hardships of climate and pioneering, many people had died and there was a desperate need to repopulate the settlement. All the Mormon women I spoke to told me that the men were the most god-like on the face of the earth. I can tell you I felt thoroughly ashamed of my previously unenlightened opinions."

"The Japanese are another people which one could not hope to understand without visiting them in their own country. I was fascinated by them. They have all the qualities that made the British great. They are not happy unless they are working. They respect age, and, because I had white hair, which is not common in Japan, even boys of 18, coming out of college, would bow to me as I passed. I passed one man with a very old woman. My little Japanese guide spoke to them and told me that the man had spent his life's savings to bring his mother, who was 80, to the temple of Niko before she died. She had wanted to see it all her life. In this temple are the original "three-graces" monkeys and the "sleeping cat."

Mrs. Wilson went on to talk of Japanese flower decoration, the symbols of this art and the Guide movement in Japan, where the class distinction is so great that so far it has been impossible to bring the higher and lower castes together, although the

(Continued on page 58.)