

The Man Who Brought Fame



*Night and day—
You are the one.
Only you beneath the moon and under the sun.
Whether near to me or far,
It's no matter, darling, where you are,
I think of you
Night and day.*

IT was the merest coincidence that the radio in the lounge of the Hotel St. George, Wellington, should have been playing that song when I went in search of Cole Porter, the composer, who spent last week in New Zealand as a passenger on board the *Franconia*.

"Tell me first how you came to write that tune," I said, and pointed in the direction of the radio.

"What—'Night and Day'?" Mr. Porter smiled. "Well, if I had listened to other people it might never have seen the light of day. When I had the musical score of 'The Gay Divorcee' ready I showed it to Fred Astaire, who played the leading part in the New York production. Fred's an old friend of mine, and he was quite frank. He said he didn't like 'Night and Day'—it had too big a range, and he doubted if he could sing it. However, after a little persuasion he said he'd give it a go—and the show had its 'try-out' in Boston. For six weeks the fate of 'The Gay Divorcee' hung in the balance—Boston wasn't a bit enthusiastic about it. Then we brought it to New York, and still it wasn't exactly burning up the town. Three months after its first opening people were beginning to like the play—especially 'Night and Day.' And, from then on, there was no stopping it. To-day there's not a country in the world, I suppose, that hasn't heard its interesting rhythm."

Cole Porter is the sort of person who makes you feel you're glad you're alive. His success as a composer (he's probably one of the most important com-

Cole Porter (left), the millionaire American musical comedy composer, whose chief pleasure in the success of his show, "The Gay Divorcee," lies in the fact that it has brought Fred Astaire to light as a great screen "find." Mr. Porter visited New Zealand on the *Franconia* last week, and he gave the exclusive interview on this page to the "Radio Record."

posers of light music in the world to-day) hasn't gone to his head; he is charmingly unaffected, vitally interested in the doings of other people and other countries—and he has more than a nodding acquaintance with celebrities whose fame is almost legendary in this part of the world.

"But I've got a song that is even better than 'Night and Day.' It's called 'You're the Top,' and it's having a wonderful run in New York in my latest musical comedy, 'Anything Goes.' This show opened on Broadway in November, and seats are now selling six weeks ahead. Just before I left on this trip I completed arrangements with the Paramount film people at Hollywood for a talking picture version. They paid the highest price that has yet been paid for a musical comedy, and Bing Crosby is to play the lead.

"Gertrude Lawrence? Yes, I know her very well, and she's one of the nicest people I know. I wrote a show for her—'Nymph Errant'—which was played in London last year. The novel was originally written by the curator of a London museum, and it concerned an English girl who left her finishing school in Switzerland and went out to seek adventure for herself. She had the most amazing adventures, capped by a period in a harem in Constantinople. However, she emerged at the end of the play with her virtue still intact."

"Is there any truth in the story that Gertrude Lawrence is going to marry Douglas Fairbanks, junior?" I asked.

"Not a word of truth in it. They like each other very much, but I don't think for a moment that they'll marry. They've just finished a run in Clemence Dane's play, 'Moonlight is Silver,' and now they're making a British talkie—'Vie de Boheme,' I believe it's to be called.

"Did you see Alice Delysia in New Zealand? I know she came out to Australia to play in 'Mother of Pearl'—but her time was short. I wrote a play for her, 'Mayfair and Montmartre,' which was presented in London in 1922. It was a failure, however. But Delysia is a wonderful actress and the English public thinks the world of her.

"Yes, I've written shows for C.B. Cochran. He's a great man to work with—an absolute saint. I see by the papers that he is bucking against the Equity. If it's as strong in England as it is in America I'm afraid he's battering his head against a brick wall. Cochran's revue, 'Streamline,' is doing wonderfully well in London. His next show is being written by Beverley Nichols. It was my failure, 'Mayfair and Montmartre,' that resulted in C. B. Cochran's bankruptcy in 1922—but since then I've made amends by writing shows for C.B. that have been great money-spinners.

"New York is bright at the moment, but London—London's the gayest spot on the face of the earth. Everyone's got their money back, and they're spending it! The London stage is in a flourishing state, and I spent several very happy months in England last year. The New York stage, too, has recovered from the doldrums, and there are some excellent plays running on Broadway at the moment. One of the finest is 'The