

to Fred Astaire

Cole Porter, Composer of "The Gav Divorcee" Visits New Zealand

'Petrified Forest,' by Robert Sherwood, the man who wrote 'Reunion in Vienna' and 'The Road to Rome.' Yes, I know Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne—they're in New York at the moment in a play of Noel Coward's, 'Point Valaine.'

"Noel Coward is another old friend of mine. Noel is making a picture in New York just now, but I'm hoping that he'll be able to come out to Singapore and make the rest of the trip with us on the Franconia. He's joined a new company, headed by Charles Arthur and Ben Hecht, two Hollywood men who got rather tired of the extravagance and waste of time in the film centre and decided to make pictures in New York. Their first film was 'Crime Without Passion'—has

it been here yet? The picture in which Noel Coward is starring should be just about finished by now.

"I spent a holiday with him a few years ago at his brother's plantation in Ceylon. At that time Noel was trying to persuade Gertrude Lawrence to play a part in his latest play, 'Private Lives,' and frantic cables were flying between Ceylon and London. The fact that she did eventually consent to play—and made a huge success of it—is now stage history. The brother that we stayed with has since died.

"I've just written the music for a new picture for Fox Films. It's called 'Argentina,' and I did all the score in New York, where records were made of it and sent across to Hollywood. Production is now under way, and the picture should be released about September.

"Yes, this is my first visit to New Zealand—and I think it's a great little country. But I've heard plenty about it. There are posters advertising New Zealand all over the Continent, England and America. Everywhere you go there are large notices telling you to 'Go to New Zealand.' I took the hint—and here I am! There's only one complaint I have to make—the number of restrictions that are imposed. If your Government wants to attract people to this country they've got



"Fred Astaire . . . didn't like 'Night and Day' when I first showed it to him . . . it had too big a range, and he doubted if he could sing it."



"Gertrude Lawrence . . . is a great friend of mine and one of the nicest people I know. I wrote a show for her last year."

to make things as pleasant as possible for them. But I must say that Wellington's got one of the best hotels that I've found on my trip. We spent several days in the hot lakes district—Rotorua, Waitomo and—what do you call the place?—Wairakei.

"And I like your radio programmes, which give lots of variety considering the smallness of the population. Commercial concerns in England are now getting over the ban on advertising programmes by establishing stations in Normandy and broadcasting across the Channel. When I left England Fred Astaire's sister, Adele—she's Lady Charles Cavendish—was singing in a special programme from one of these stations.

"I'm working on a new musical comedy now—it's to be a sort of satirical romance on modern life, and it's scheduled for production in New York in the autumn. Musical shows are going well there, and if it wasn't that you might accuse me of swanking, I'd say that my own show, 'Anything Goes,' is doing better than any of them."

Travelling with Mr. Porter are his wife and Mr. Moss Hart, once office boy for the famous Florenz Ziegfeld, and now a playwright of considerable standing. One of New York's greatest stage successes of recent years, 'As Thousands Cheer,' was written by Mr. Hart.