

Laughs And "Breaks" In The

IN the days when the New Zealand broadcasting service consisted of .0001 horse-power transmitters, a few gramophone records given to the stations by friends and admirers, and a handful of "old faithfuls" who could be relied upon to sing, play, recite or tap-dance at a moment's notice, there were many amusing incidents behind the scenes. Over a bowl of tea and a cigarette the other day, one of the men who was early associated with broadcasting spoke to the "Radio Record" of those early days—and of the fun and disappointments that are invariably connected with any pioneering venture.

"Perhaps one of the best hoaxes in New Zealand broadcasting was put across myself and about 160 other 'innocents,'" he said. "An advertisement appeared asking for an announcer for a certain Auckland radio station. There were about 160 applicants, and we were duly advised to prepare a programme and report back to the studio where it would be broadcast and listened to by the general manager of the concern, who, incidentally, resided some 600 miles away. I was more than mildly excited at the prospect of going on the air, especially as the broadcast would be picked up as far south as Christchurch, and I went to no end of trouble preparing a programme on Coleridge Taylor's works. I duly performed for 20 minutes, and then returned home—six miles from Auckland—where my friends and relations had been listening in on a four-valve set. But they told me that they hadn't heard a single note of my broadcast, and I discovered that the transmitting plant was of such low power that it was incapable of covering an area of more than a square mile or two. In the meantime, the tests for announcers were going ahead, and the station was provided with a fortnight's programmes at no cost at all. On the last night an aged violinist was among the performers, and what he lacked in talent he made up for in zeal. His playing was atrocious, and he insisted on going right through his repertoire. But he didn't know that, a few minutes after he had started, the station had quietly switched him off and plugged in to the orchestra of the Lyric Theatre round the corner."

A recording of the Lord Mayor's Show provided Auckland with one of its biggest broadcasting thrills—and certainly deserved the 1926 prize for a classic piece of leg-pulling. In those days performers were wont to turn up at the studio only if they felt inclined, and often it was necessary to improvise

When N.Z. Radio Was Very Young

a programme to fill in the gap left on the programme schedule on account of the non-appearance of a singer or a musician. It was because of this that the officials of one broadcasting station were forced to look hurriedly through their stocks of recordings one evening to carry on the programme. "The Lord Mayor's Show" was decided upon, and it soon had Auckland

listeners sitting bolt upright in their seats. "This is 2LO, London, calling," went the record, "and you are now about to witness the procession connected with the Lord Mayor's Show. . . ." There fol-

lowed the sounds of crowds in the London streets, the fanfare of trumpets and all the sounds incidental to this great annual ceremony. No sooner had the recording finished than the studio was deluged with congratulatory telegrams and telephone rings. The "Herald" and the "Star" next day made reference to the wonderful rebroadcast from London at a time when Empire broadcasts were but a remote possibility, and the Empire service still seven years away! For days Auckland buzzed with the news, and it was finally "blown out" by the "Star," which published the true facts of the case, gleaned from a station operator who couldn't keep a good story to himself.

About this time IYA had a line run across France Street, Newton, to the Prince Edward Theatre for rebroadcasts of the orchestra. On another of the many occasions when a performer failed to turn up the station called upon George Poore, the leader of the orchestra and an excellent flautist, to give an extra item or two from the studio. The announcer did not give Mr. Poore's name, but asked listeners to guess who the flautist was. The response was amazing—and a little staggering. The station's post office box was all too small to carry the replies, which came from remote lighthouses and lonely farms, from Australia and the Chatham Islands. It was the last time that an announce-

ment of that kind was made over the air!

A similar incident occurred in the early days of broadcasting in England. A speaker was giving the history of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster. At the close of his talk he mentioned casually that if anyone liked to be outside the main entrance at ten o'clock next morning he would show him over. At that hour the next day the queue stretched for two blocks, and was growing every minute!

One of the first dance relays in New Zealand broadcasting was brought to an amusing finale. A hall was carefully



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