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WELLINGTON

Day and Night Service



Auckland Notes

By "Neutron"

SO far as IYA is concerned, this has been an off-week for talks, but there has been a decided improvement in the variety of musical offerings. Monday was an oratorio night; Wednesday provided an old-time burnt cork show; and the balance of the week was well diversified. Possibly 'Deeds, not words,' is to be the station slogan for the coming year of grace—and yet some words, thoughtfully or gaily spoken, go down very easily.

I ZR showed praiseworthy enterprise on Saturday by relaying the opening gala day of the West End Rowing Club. Announcer Bill Hindman was in good form, and showed a heap of optimism about the weather. Even when the rain was coming down in jugfuls he kept a weather eye lifting for the silver lining. In this sport-loving community there seems no valid reason why sports broadcasts should, bar odd rep. cricket fixtures, be limited to the winter season. A little bit of all sorts of sport adds variety for the sports lover.

IYA's Broadcasting Choir and Orchestra combined effectively to make Monday's "Messiah" excerpts thoroughly attractive for listeners. Handel's magnificent music was capably interpreted, and I thought that the whole performance went off particularly well. One really needs to see as well as hear to get the proper effect of the complete oratorio, but as it was given, with well-chosen excerpts, the performance was well suited to broadcasting requirements, and there will surely be few listeners with a sense of music who will cavil at a fine evening with music that will last.

THE "Unfinancial Chat on the Bank of England," by Mr. D. A. Neal, from IYA on Tuesday, was informative and topical in this era of war debt payments and refusals to pay. Interest was added to the talk by reason of the fact that the speaker had been a member of the staff of "The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street." The latter name probably had its origin in a cartoon picturing the bank as an old lady sitting on a pile of bullion which she refused to hand over at the request of a politician. The bank was founded in 1694 because William and Mary were hard up. William Paterson formed a company with a capital of £1,200,000, which was to be lent to the Government at 8 per cent. From that has grown the world-famous institution with its staff of 1425 men, 2300 women clerks, and a small army of printers and messengers.

It is not generally known, said Mr. Neal, that the bank suspended payment in 1797. There was a report that a French frigate had landed troops in Wales, and the Government, fearing a financial panic, refused to permit the bank to pay out. From 1700 for 17 years the bank conducted the State lotteries, out of which in that period the British Government made a profit of over £11,000,000. Greenwich Naval Hospital and London Bridge being built from these profits. The first £5 Bank of England note was issued in

1793, and the first £1 and £2 notes four years later. In those days the English criminal code was terribly harsh. Forgery of Bank of England notes was a capital offence, and yet between 1805 and 1818 no fewer than 207 persons were executed for forgery. This so roused the British public that the £1 and £2 notes, principal object of the forger's skill, were withdrawn and not again issued till 1914, when the single pound note once again passed from hand to hand.

Of the several entertaining stories told by the speaker there was one concerning a bank cashier in Newcastle. Payment of the notes issued in London is made only by the bank in London, and when some many years ago a stranger strolled in to the Newcastle branch bank, and demanded coin for a London note he was told the rule. The cashier added, however, that, as an act of courtesy, if the stranger could persuade some reputable local citizen to speak for him, payment would be made. "Why," said the stranger, "there's Mr. Blank here in the office. He knows me. Don't you, Mr. Blank?" The worthy citizen said he did, payment was made and the stranger departed rapidly. Then, said the aforementioned local light: "You asked me if I knew him, and I said yes, but if you'd asked me if I knew any good of him I should have had to say no!"

Between 1835 and 1840, Mr. Neal told us, the bank's system of book-keeping was modernised. It no longer recorded financial transactions on separate slabs of wood for each person, with notches of various definite sizes for different sums. These pieces of wood stored by the bank for generations got in the way and were sent across to be burnt in the stove in the House of Lords. However, the man in charge pushed in so many financial records at once that the building caught fire and, as a result, the House of Lords and the House of Commons building was completely destroyed, the present buildings at St. Stephens, Westminster, being the result. When the Bank of England decides on reform it does make a clean sweep, doesn't it!

WEDNESDAY'S Minstrel Show from IYA, with Alan McSkimming, Alan McElwain, Elton Black and Co., was reminiscent of far forgotten days before the talkies came; indeed, before the birth of any moving pictures. The old songs and choruses and some of the gags, too, were so old that they must have been new to many listeners. Alan McSkimming was on the job as Massa Johnston. The others evidently enjoyed themselves, and so, I imagine, did all save the most superior listeners. Quite a jolly, if brief, programme.

THURSDAY, too, found IYA with a pleasantly varied programme, the orchestra, Reg. Morgan, Gwenda Weir and Bert Hall, comedian, supplying the bulk of the entertainment, with a fine contralto from Te Aroha filling the reserved time to advantage. I prefer Reg. Morgan when he doesn't play his own accompaniments: he comes through on my set not nearly so well when he does.