

SUNDAY night's broadcast of "The

Merchant of Venice," by the Dame Sybil Thorndike Company will not soon be forgotten. The skilful cutting did not break the thread of the story, and, indeed, the omission of passages of florid imagery which only delay the action, gave the play the swift movement which is necessary for radio presentation, where the eyes cannot feast themselves on gorgeous settings and costumes. Dame Sybil Thorndike's "Portia" had all the youthful charm and wit which distinguishes this favourite Shakespearean heroine, and Lewis Casson's interpretation of the complex character of Shylock was most convincing. The famous "Trial Scene," tainted as it is by school recitations, regained its true vitality and freshness in the hands of these magnificent artists. Words which had lost their full meaning from constant repetition glowed again with a new significance when they were spoken in their setting with perfect naturalness. It seems to me that these two have learnt the secret which is known to but a few artists of rare understanding and imagination—the secret of not acting, but for a space of time really living a part.

ON Thursday Mr. S. D. Potter gave a talk which should be of interest to all New Zealanders. Though the subject was "Native Bird Life on the Little Barrier Island," Mr. Potter gave first a general survey of the condition of native birds. When the Maori alone inhabited these islands the bush-clad ranges and plains were a paradise for countless birds. The food supply was ample, and as there were practically no enemies many birds knew no fear and were tame almost to foolishness. As a result, they fell an easy prey to the destruction and chaos that followed in the train of the pakeha's civilisation. Bush fires, weasels, rats, and man himself with a lust for killing accounted for many of these lovely creatures. Finally there was formed the New Zealand Bird Protection Society, which had a hard battle against ignorance, selfishness and lack of money. Sanctuaries were established, and now, adapting themselves to the changed conditions, some species are able to hold their own and some are even increasing.

MR. POTTER then gave some very convincing reasons why we should protect our birds. Apart from the fact that seventy species are peculiar to New Zealand and we owe their preservation as a duty to posterity, the birds are necessary for the good of the country. We must have a certain amount of forest area, and it has been found that of all the native trees the seeds of the kauri and the beeches alone are not dispersed by birds. Alien birds are useless for this as they do not penetrate any great distance into the bush. Birds are also the most important check upon the insect menace, and at present the balance between man and insect is only just in favour of man. The devastation that follows a plague of insects has several notable examples. Formerly in the southern States of Europe birds were killed mercilessly to provide dishes for rich gourmets, and as a natural penalty in-

sects destroyed all vegetation, even stripping trees in city streets. To avert the peril the Governments concerned immediately introduced birds to the devastated areas, and passed laws protecting them. Then there is the classic story of Utah, where in 1848 a plague of Rocky Mountain crickets devoured the crops; the populace threatened with famine attacked the pest with shovels. Then a huge flock of sea-gulls flew to their aid, devouring the crickets, disgorging them in the water and coming back for a fresh instalment. The gulls are now preserved by an unwritten law, and a monument has been erected to them at a cost of 12,000 dollars. In New Zealand we need all the assistance we can get from our insectivorous birds, and surely it would warm the heart of any aster or tomato-grower to see the zest with which the beautiful shining cuckoo dispatches any number of caterpillars.

ON Saturday, "Fore Peak's" story of "A Pirate Attack" concerned the "Antelope," which ship, under the command of Captain Watkins, escaped after a severe conflict. She was heading for the Canton River, and after she had passed the Asses' Ears in the Ladrone Islands, two pirate boats heavily armed, came out, but Captain Watkins turned Long Tom on them and they pulled back to land. Two hours later, when the ship was becalmed in the lee of the land, the pirates returned with two more ships, but Long Tom, again coming into action, knocked a hole in one. The other three advanced till the crews could leap at the bowsprit, and while the excitement lasted there, one boat dropped back and attacked the ship in the rear. The cook, with admirable presence of mind, dashed boiling water into the faces of the foe, and the skipper, seeing this effective treatment, prescribed more of

this same medicine for the attackers in the bow. They were at length repelled, and with the rising of a squall, the brig moved speedily out of danger.

I AM sorry that Mr. E. J. Bror O. Muller has given us the last talk of his series on "The Danish Folk School and Its Influence on Farming and National Life." He wound up by summarising the results of the Folk School's system of education. Most of the students received their instruction at a period when their minds were receptive; consequently their prejudices fell away, and they started out into life with a faith in the future and a courage to work. This was the saving of the economic life of Denmark. Wheat, which had been their chief product last century, had fallen in value, and with the clear-sightedness bred of the Folk School outlook, the farmers turned to the production of butter, bacon, and eggs. Co-operation played a great part in the recovery of Denmark, and four-fifths of the organisers of these co-operative societies came from the Folk Schools. The greater part of Denmark's produce passes through these associations, thus giving the small farmer all the advantages that result from large-scale dealings. The urban drift, which is a problem in most agricultural countries, does not exist in Denmark, where the social attractions of the countryside are almost equal to those of the city. The principles of the Folk School have spread to the other Scandinavian countries, and schools run on the same lines are increasing in different European lands. Since New Zealand and Denmark primarily depend on rural activities and overseas markets, it would certainly be to New Zealand's advantage to try the methods which have brought to Denmark not only prosperity, but enlightenment and vision.

Auckland Notes

By "Neutron"

Our Mailbag

Overseas Relays Appreciated.

AS a stay-at-home New Zealander, I greatly appreciate having London and its celebrities brought to me, as was done on three occasions last week. I thought Miss Jane Mander's talk particularly interesting and entertaining, and the relay of GSD for a triumph for IYA. To hear the Prince of Wales perfectly, in one's own home, from London, 13,000 miles away, is a memorable experience. "The Merchant of Venice" relay was magnificent, and I would like to thank the Broadcasting Board for affording me the opportunity of hearing such famous artists. —"Mahomet" (Takapau).

"Charley's Aunt"

(Continued from page 7.)

like to. The trick was done. I got the idea of my play and wrote it, and a week or so afterwards Penley took it for a little out-of-the-way tour in the provinces, to get himself into the part."

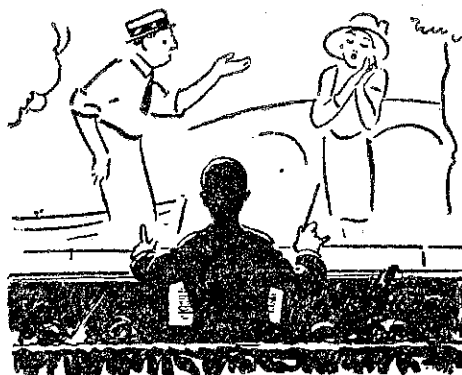
Shortly afterward Penley presented "Charley's Aunt" in London, where it ran for 1466 nights! Since then it has been played regularly in nearly every English-speaking country in the world. It was made famous throughout Australia many years ago by Charles Thornton, and some years later, in 1914-15, Norman Aitken made a highly successful tour of New Zealand with an amateur company, playing "Charley's Aunt" and "The Private Secretary."

Radio Round the World

ALTHOUGH Holland possesses only two recognised broadcasting stations which give musical entertainment, namely, Huizen and Hilversum, commentaries upon events of national importance are frequently given from the long-wave station at Scheveningen-Haven, which was erected for the purpose of broadcasting commercial reports and market quotations. However, any incident which may be topical and of interest to listeners in other countries is often broadcast.

A NEW bust of the distinguished scientist, Heinrich Hertz, was exhibited at the last Berlin Radio Exhibition, and attracted much attention. Hertz is honoured to-day for his scientific researches with ultra short-waves that have since become known as "Hertzian waves." It was as a pupil of Hertz that Senator Marconi first became interested in the subject and finally evolved the modern method of wireless communication.

DURING the months of September and October of last year nearly thirty B.B.C. programmes were radiated from aerials in America, Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and the Irish Free State. British military band music is especially popular in Germany, France has a liking for the symphony concerts, while Switzerland and Austria prefer concerts of the popular variety. Talks are at a discount on the Continent, but in America they are all the rage. The Columbia network frequently makes a feature of the B.B.C. talks.



"Bits and Pieces"

Is the title of a One-Hour Programme arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Will McKeon for presentation from 2YA on
SATURDAY, MARCH 4.