

Auckland Notes

By "Neutron"

COMMENCING with a Municipal Band relay on Sunday, a better-than-usual Monday programme, and winding up with a worth-while St. Pat's Day programme, IYA, without giving any exceptional fare, has been worth tuning in to through the past week. Reg. Morgan, Chrissie Foster, and the Baileys were the attractions on the Monday programme. The Baileys provided most enjoyable variety and I thought them particularly good in their Dickens presentation. Reg. Morgan has an excellent voice, but, personally, I should enjoy his singing more if sometimes he presented a better type of song.

ONE of the best programmes heard for some time was put on by IZR this week in a Schubert session. The examples of the work of the Master of Melody were well chosen and they were held together by just sufficient of a thread of description to make the session most interesting.

MR. R. A. FALLA was most interesting in his description of "Bird Life in the Antarctic" from IYA last Wednesday. As ornithologist of the last Mawson Expedition in the sturdy old Discovery (though modestly he didn't mention this), he really knew his subject. Bird life is plentiful "way down south." Even when Scott was 200 miles from the sea on his Polar journey, he met skua gulls, going south too. The albatross, most wonderful of all gliders, and the little petrel (from the Spanish "little Peter," owing to its appearance of walking on the water), are each members of the same family. All the petrels have the same remarkable provision for the nutrition of their young. They stuff them with squid and other sea food till the youngsters can eat no more. Then the parents leave the young bird to live on its surplus fat and grow feathers. When it gets really hungry it is able to fly and feed itself. A ten-months-old still downy albatross weighed on the Crozets tipped the beam at 25lb., though the largest flying albatross scales no more than 16. Then there was the Antarctic petrel, whose young squirt a stream of evil-smelling oily stuff from their throats at all intruders until ammunition runs short. Mr. Falla was most interesting in describing the varied penguin life, most characteristic of Antarctica, from the 4ft. 90lb. Emperor penguin with its courtly bow for all-comers, including man, down to the smallest Charlie Chaplin of the penguin family. This has certainly been a capital series of talks, and the next should be equally worthy of attention.

FATHER TERRY'S talk on Irish music from IYA was enthusiastic and scholarly, but rather lengthy. More illustrations would have added to its interest. In no country in Europe did the harp go so far back, said the lecturer. A Greek geographer of 500 B.C. had described the Irish as playing melodiously on the harp, and in the years after St. Patrick brought Christianity to Erin, Irish monks

taught music to Western Europe. According to an English authority, harmony, counter-point, and the diatonic scale were known and used in Ireland one thousand years ago. After dwelling on the wonderful folk-music of Erin, Father Terry said that "Robin Adair," popularly thought to be Scottish, was really an old Irish air, admired by Handel, while Yankee Doodle and Dixie were also borrowed from Ireland. (I wonder what Uncle Sam will think of this.) Musicians and music-lovers, his Reverence concluded, have every reason to be grateful to Ireland.

AMONG a variety of interesting things about the "native and imported game" of the north, Mr. S. D. Potter mentioned a curious change in the swan family. Cygnets of the Australian black swan are pure white at first, while young birds of the European white swan are black in their early life. He pleaded powerfully too, for a stoppage of "the fearful butchery" of the godwits who come here each year from Siberia and are being steadily decimated. It is long now since I shot any of these birds, but Mr. Potter's appeal for the harmless little wanderer made me at least sign off for good. Let's hope his plea fell on other receptive ears.

CAPTAIN F. H. BILLINGTON'S talk on the Irish who "fight like devils for conciliation, and hate each other for the love of God," showed, for a Sassenach, an astonishing insight into Irish character. Tragedy and comedy tread on each other's heels in Erin. There was the story, for instance, of the Galway gentleman challenged by another, almost a stranger, whom he had no recollection of insulting. The duel took place, the Galway man was winged, and the challenger, as custom decreed, came up to shake hands with the wounded man. "Tell me, now, why did ye challenge me," the wounded man asked. It was then, bending down, that the successful marksman realised there had been a mistake. "Och, be-dad," said he "ye're the wrong wan intirely. Faith, the man I wanted had a glass eye!" And here is another as an illustration of the Irish genius for tact and diplomacy. In a Parliamentary election in Belfast an M.P. called at a small house, and was mystified to see a framed picture of the Pope on one side of the best room faced by another of King William crossing the Boyne. "Well, now," the wife explained, "me husband's an Orangeman, an' shure I'm a good Catholic. We get on well enough till on each Boyne Day me husband goes out wid the Orangemen an' gets drunk. Then he takes down his Holiness an' just jumps on him. So, whin he's in bed I takes down King Billy, bad scran to him, pawns him, buys a new Pope, then hands me man the pawn ticket to get out his Billy whin he can."

AMONG the best items of the week were the contributions of the Harmonisers, and on St. Pat's Night, Miss Kay Christie. Her contralto voice is strong and pleasing, and she has a really wonderful enunciation.

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