

"ME AND GUS"

Country Comedy With a N.Z. Setting

WINTER starts unofficially on May 1, and a variety of new programmes from both local and overseas sources have been selected by the NZBS for this year's winter listening. On this and following pages details are given of the more important broadcasts which may be heard during the next three months

ME AND GUS, a series of humorous sketches of New Zealand farm life a general listening programme, which should appeal to all New Zealanders. It relates experiences of a kind familiar to thousands and is rich in a humour that springs from the conditions of life in this country. *Me and Gus* will be heard from all YA and YZ stations, starting first from 2YA on Tuesday, May 1, at 7.30 p.m.

Mark Hendrick and Gus Tomlins, the main characters of the series, were farmers on Mossy Road, under the slopes of Mt. Egmont, just after the First World War. Mark, who tells the



FRANK S. ANTHONY

stories, remarks at the outset that things would have been pretty bad if Gus hadn't decided to settle in Taranaki when he did. Gus bought the worst farm on Mossy Road, and Mark came along later and bought the second worst. The year of the Great butter slump, "when all the cow cockies were doing a starve," they decided to earn a quick fortune wood-splitting. That venture is the subject of the first sketch.

Titles of some of the other sketches are: Mowing the Hay, Gus Buys a Horse, Home-brewing with Gus, Gus Builds a Stack, Gus Buys a Bull, The Masquerade Ball, The Chib Game, Gus Meets Violet, The Dance at Tuna, and The Prize Fight.

Me and Gus is the creation of a New Zealander, Frank Sheldon Anthony, who died in London in 1925. It was adapted for broadcasting by Francis Jackson, a Wellington radio writer, from a book of the same title which was published after Anthony's death.

Frank Anthony was born at Makaraka, Poverty Bay, in 1891, and spent his childhood and youth on a South Taranaki farm. Before World War I he spent some time at sea in windjammers and, when war broke out, joined the

Navy. Soon after service in the Battle of Jutland, he was seriously injured—one lung was permanently affected—when he was crushed between a buoy and his ship. As a result he had frequent ill-health for the rest of his life.

Invalided back to New Zealand, Anthony later bought an 80-acre farm near Mt. Egmont. Living alone there, he wrote in the evenings his stories of New Zealand farm life. He developed the farm for dairying, then sold it and concentrated on his literary work. He went to London and had reached a stage where his stories were being regularly accepted, when he died on January 13, 1925. Frank Anthony's mother is still alive and lives at Parameira, near Wellington.

Follow the Call, a novel based largely on Anthony's own experiences, was published by A. H. and A. W. Reed in 1936, and *Me and Gus* appeared in 1938. Francis Jackson, who wrote the radio scripts of *Me and Gus*, told *The Listener* he was first asked to look at the material about two years ago. "I had been used to dramatising stories," he said, "but I decided that these sketches would lose much of their natural humour if they were treated in that way. That is why they are simply read. My job was to give them a dramatic form suitable for broadcasting."

"Frank Anthony's success in creating New Zealand characters of the kind that appear in *Me and Gus* is something new in my experience," Mr. Jackson said.

"He did something with the human and humorous side of farm life in this country that no one else has done. He wrote with sincerity, too. There is no feeling of farce. Every Taranaki farmer will be able to see himself in the characters of these sketches, and I think a good many other people will see themselves, too. I feel certain that Frank Anthony's creations will enjoy a tremendous popularity."

Mr. Jackson has most of Anthony's notes and manuscripts and two unpublished books. The author of *Me and Gus* was apparently a quite prolific writer, he said.

Wellington-born, Mr. Jackson has been writing for radio since he returned from the Middle East theatre in 1942. He is also the author of two books, *Passage to To-bruk* and *Air Gunner*, and he has adapted *Me and Gus* for re-publication in book form.

There are 24 quarter-hour episodes in *Me and Gus*. They will be heard at 7.30 p.m. every Tuesday from 2YA, and will start from other stations as follows (actual dates to be fixed later):—Week beginning: May 21, 1YZ; June 11, 4YA; July 2, 3YZ; July 23, 1YA; August 13,



ME AND GUS (and friend), as seen by Neville Lodge, in one of the illustrations for the book version of the series, to be published later by A. H. and A. W. Reed. The incident illustrated above is taken from the first episode

2YZ; September 3, 3YA; and September 24, 4YZ. Radio New Zealand has been broadcasting *Me and Gus* since early March.

What's in a Name?

A SERIES of short talks discussing the meaning and origin of many New Zealand place-names will be broadcast from Stations 1YA and 3YA, starting early next month, under the title *What's in the Name?* The talks will be broadcast twice weekly, English and Maori

place-names alternating. The scripts are written by Johannes C. Andersen, who will deal with the "Maori" names, and Alan Mulgan. Both the historical and philological aspects of place-names will be discussed, and the talks on Maori names will be read by W. T. Ngata,

who will also elaborate on points of Maori pronunciation arising from them. There will be 50 or more talks in the series.

Other programmes planned for winter listening this year include *Peace Through Law*, a series of six talks by E. K. Braybrooke, a lecturer in international law at Victoria University College, and *The Way I Have Come*, a series by New Zealanders of the older generation, each of whom has made a contribution to the progress of the country over the past twenty or thirty years. The speakers will include H. F. von Haast, A. P. Harper, Sir Albert Ellis, and E. Earle Valle.



Spencer Digby photograph
ALAN MULGAN



JOHANNES C. ANDERSEN

A new historical series called *What They Said at the Time*, is also being prepared by the Talks Department of the NZBS. These talks will attempt to deal in entertaining fashion with historical events which we now take for granted but which caused much controversy at the time they happened. Events already selected include the shifting of the capital from Auckland to Wellington, the abolition of the provinces, and the passing of the original Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

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