

JANUARY 28, 1944

## Burning Ourselves Out

IF Macaulay had seen New Zealand during the last three or four weeks he might have written a new version of his famous forecast. Instead of standing on a broken arch of London Bridge sketching the ruins of St. Paul's his traveller from New Zealand might have reported "a vast solitude" in New Zealand itself where once there had been forests and farms. For it would not have occurred to Macaulay that a people who had not learnt to be careful with fire after a century of intermittent destruction would learn before it had burnt itself out. He would have assumed that we had been born with some defect in our make-up that robbed us of the power of adapting ourselves to our environment, and that we would survive about as long as the Australian aborigines. Perhaps he would have been wrong. But it would be easier to laugh at his folly if we were less active in exhibiting our own—if we had learnt, for example, how to ward off erosion in a country that produces trees twice as fast as they become twice as numerous; how to protect bush and grass in forty inches of rain, or more; how to put manure into the soil instead of smoke into the air; and how to deal with people who threaten our existence every time they smoke a cigarette. On the very driest days of the past dry month some farmers were lighting fires to improve the pasture. Picnickers were boiling billies in the creek-beds and even in the bush. Holders of gorse-infested suburban sections were cleaning them up with a match. As it happened, disaster threatened but did not come. We suffered some loss, but not much. Our "luck held"—as it has held so often; and as we so fatuously suppose it will continue to hold. It is for example raining as this note is being written. But it did not rain in many places last week or the week before or the two weeks before that. The sun beat down, the trees wilted, the grass became straw—but smoke rose somewhere nearly every day.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## OPERA BROADCASTS

Sir,—May I express my gratitude that at long last we were allowed to hear Beethoven's Choral Symphony from 2YC last week. After "one good deed a week" would it be too much to hope for a broadcast of his Mass in D (Missa Solemnis), and his opera "Fidelio" as well?

Talking of operas reminds me of the wish frequently expressed in this column to become acquainted with the cast of the opera which is broadcast. In reply to these suggestions, *The Listener* pointed out some time ago that there is no space at present for printing the detailed programme of the opera. But why cannot the cast (including the conductor) be announced, as it used to be done, prior to the performance and at the end again, if necessary. I am convinced that I am not the only one to be more interested in hearing the names of the principal singers than being informed that HMV or Columbia or Parlophone—as the case may be—recorded this particular work. I am aware that the names of the recording firms have to be mentioned, but must it be done at the expense of the artists whose performance we enjoy?

MUSICA (Wellington).

## OUR SOLDIERS AND OTHERS

Sir,—“Excessive self-conceit makes a nation look ridiculous.” I thank the honest gentleman “Ex 2nd N.Z.E.F.” for those words, and also for his other debunking observations which I trust will penetrate the skin of the average New Zealander. Since leaving England five years ago I have often wondered if all life outside this country is purely a myth. Patiently each of those five years I have listened to the deeds and achievements of New Zealanders, and it would appear that so much depends on this wondrous land and its inhabitants that if by some trick of fate the whole lot disappeared overnight the rest of the world would cease to exist. Apparently it is difficult for the people of New Zealand to visualise that countries other than New Zealand occasionally play some part in the affairs of the world. All fair-minded people will, I think, agree that as a small and young country New Zealand has done and is still doing remarkably well. It should do so, of course, having numerous grown-up examples from which to learn, and to make the glaring mistakes of older lands would be inexcusable. But self delusion and make-believe seems to be its chronic disability.

ALBERT E. YOUNG (Rotorua).

## MAORIS AFTER THE WAR.

Sir,—Your correspondent Hugh Patterson sounds like some superior European dealing with mere natives in his suggestion to rehabilitate the Maori Battalion by offering them to the Imperial authorities as a permanent force. Perhaps it would be better if those who came later than the Maoris to New Zealand would supply personnel for such a force and allow the Maoris to retain at least some of their rights and privileges in their own native land. Let Hugh Patterson and other Europeans provide such a force with men.

It is, however, pleasing to note that there will be no discrimination in the matter of rehabilitation for Maoris and Pakehas after this war. Already Lieutenant-Colonel Baker has outlined the aspects of the scheme applicable both to Maoris and Pakehas—as New Zealanders.

MAHA WINIATA (Auckland).

## PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED PROGRAMMES

Sir,—May I join with “Musical Ear” (Christchurch), and express my appreciation also for 3YA's morning programmes—especially the 9.0-10.0 a.m. session? I wonder if it would be possible for this session to come on the air earlier—say at about 8.0 a.m., in order that more listeners may hear it. I only hear it myself when on holiday or when I leave at a very late hour for the office. Such a programme starts the day off well (in my estimation), instead of all the very “hearty” band music and bright jazz numbers which most stations put over every morning.

I should also like to take this opportunity of making a plea for more complete programmes in *The Listener*. Sometimes it appears to me that those responsible for the set-up of *The Listener* overlook the fact that most people buy it for the programmes alone, and as it has virtually a monopoly in this direction surely the programmes can be complete?

YASDNIL (Wellington).

(The number of people who buy any journal for one feature alone is never big enough to keep it alive. The number who buy *The Listener* for programmes alone may be one in 10 of its subscribers, or a few more or less: we do not know, and our correspondent certainly does not. We do know why “most people” buy it, and if we did not, we should soon go out of business.—Ed.).

## CRITICISM IN NEW ZEALAND.

Sir,—With every statement in “Veteran's” letter I heartily agree, except one—and in that one I think he may seem to be saying something that he does not really mean. This is his statement that for the critic “to allow personal likes and dislikes to affect his judgment is as immoral as robbing a till.” But how can anyone build up a recognisable standard of taste and judgment, and so of criticism, except by liking some things and disliking others? Anything else is mere commercialism: to become a kind of blotting-paper for all the advertising agents and ballyhoo artists: to accept a thing as good not because it appeals to you but because you have been told it is good. But I suspect I am doing “Veteran” an injustice. What he probably means is that the critic should not allow his judgment of a book to be affected if he happens to know the author personally and considers him to be either a saint or a scoundrel. However, it is because the other interpretation is so often forced upon us in so many subtle ways as the right one—that because a film, say, is popular, or cost a lot of money, it must therefore be good—that I think the distinction should be made clearer.

G.M. (Wellington).

## BEST SELLERS.

Sir,—Your article on “Best Sellers” omits to mention the book *Progress and Poverty*, by Henry George. Over 3,000,000 copies of this book were published and it was printed in sixteen languages.

HUGH PATTERSON (Gisborne).

(Certainly a best seller if our correspondent's figures are correct, but not included in either of the two lists we consulted.—Ed.).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Joyce Roberts (Napier). *The Listener* was right.

J. Hall (Masterton). Nothing suitable available.

D. J. Shaw (Waitakere). No suitable photographs.