

Two Who Followed

IT seemed to us last week that the most important men in Western Europe—and at the moment in the whole world—were those landing on French soil with guns in their hands: Allied soldiers, and the sailors and air-men helping them. Our feeling is still the same. But it is worth looking for a moment at two of the men who followed—one in his seventieth, the other in his seventy-fifth year. They had first met forty-four years earlier, and the elder had sent the younger to prison. Six years later they met again, with the tables not merely turned, but upside down. The younger man now had the power, the elder the role of supplicant, and it is on record that the attitude of the younger was a "little stiff." It could not have appeared to an observer then that the foundation was being laid for an enduring friendship; that these two men eleven years later would be sitting side by side in the same Cabinet, facing the same crisis; or that they would land on a French beach twenty-seven years later still to observe together one of the great movements of history. But it has happened. Field-Marshal Smuts is the political sage of the British Commonwealth; many would say of the whole democratic world. Mr. Churchill is the leader and inspirer of that Commonwealth, and most people think its saviour. They are as unlike as any two men could be who (politically) wear the same clothes and speak the same language; but for a generation at least they have fought the same fight and marched to the same music. When Smuts pleaded for self-government for the South African people—release from the consequences of defeat only four years after they had been imposed—it was Churchill who persuaded the House of Commons to agree. He was then only thirty-two; but the wisdom of 1906 was of critical importance in 1916, and perhaps made the difference in 1940 between crisis and disaster. To-day our fate is in the hands of our soldiers. For an unnumbered succession of days it was in the hands of these two old men whom our soldiers have just been cheering.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

RELIGION AND MODERN SPEECH

Sir,—It would appear from your recent article that much of the criticism of *The Man Born to Be King* arises out of the use of modern speech. It is perhaps reasonable to expect that people would find the dynamic modernity of the language of the plays startling, nurtured as we are to-day on a religious diet of archaic English, but that they should freely condemn so progressive a step on the part of a well-informed writer is truly pathetic. Further, it is no more feasible that the Jews spoke 17th century English than that they used our modern tongue, or even a German or French translation. When Jesus preached did He use an obsolete Hebraic speech to exhort the Jews of His time? Would so great a revolutionary have considered it irreligious to use the current speech? The mere suggestions are ludicrous.

The variants of English used in the plays are intended to represent to us the variants which would certainly have existed among a group of variously educated Hebrews during the Roman occupation. Where cultured speech is demanded for High Priests or noblemen it is represented by cultured English voices. What is more natural than to represent a town dialect of Jerusalem by Cockney in an English version?

G. A. McCracken (Hamilton).

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

Sir,—It was with interest I read Dr. Turbott's article on preventive medicine in America. According to the well known U.S. paper *The National Observer*, the new Health Board of Chicago consists of five laymen, including the Commissioner of Public Works, the Commissioner of Buildings, the Chief of Police, and the Fire Commissioner. The protective clause of the ordinance reads as follows:

The Board of Health shall pass no rule or regulation which shall compel any person to submit to vaccination, or injection of any virus, or medication, against his will or without his consent, or in the case of a minor or other person under disability, the consent of his or her parent, guardian, or conservator, and nothing in this ordinance contained or in any other ordinance hereafter passed in force in this city, shall be construed to authorise or empower any person or officer to so vaccinate, inject, or medicate without such consent, or to authorise or empower the said Board of Health to adopt any rule or regulation requiring or authorise any such vaccination, injection or medication.

J. W. PERRETT (Auckland).

L'EMBARRAS DES RICHESSES

Sir,—On Wednesday nights at 9.30, 2YC commences to delight us with an all-too-short half-hour of "Highlights from the Operas." But usually 2YH waxes operatic almost simultaneously. Being eager to listen to any opera broadcast within our range of good reception, we at the end of this half-hour have a shaking palsy resulting from frantic vacillations from one station to the other. Therefore we ask if the authorities might be persuaded to arrange separate times of broadcast of these two programmes.

MORRIS PURDY (Masterton).

WHO WROTE IT?

Sir,—On page 5 of *The Listener*, May 22-28, under the heading "What Is Assonance?" "Subscriber" (Wellington) quoted "Maiden crowned with glossy blackness," etc. (Fedalma). About 40 years ago I came across the first stanza

in a book on Prosody. Since then I have been unable to identify the writer of the poem (?)—nor can I find it in any book of quotations through any key word. I should be obliged if you could supply me with the name of the writer, or perhaps J. C. Beaglehole would if it does not pain him too much. "Subscriber" calls the poem "A Classic in English."

J. MONTEATH (Christchurch).

(It was new to us, but "Subscriber" assures us that the writer's name will be found in the immortal Nesfield: George Eliot, "The Spanish Gypsy," 1868.—Ed.)

HENDRIK VAN LOON

Sir,—You are in part right, and in part wrong, in your article about Hendrik Van Loon. He did come to New Zealand on a luxury liner—there was a time when luxury liners came here—so far you were right. You say, however, that if he did land in New Zealand he remained incognito. In that you are wrong. He did land, and in Auckland he gave two lectures, one in the University College Hall, the other in the Town Hall, and there must be many others who like myself attended those lectures and remember them. I do not remember the dates or the titles of the lectures, am not sure they had one, but I do remember the lecturer. He looked, dressed, and talked not at all as one expected of a traveller on a luxury liner. He talked much in the same way as he wrote, and I am sure that his addresses were a delight, as well as an education, to all who heard them.

TOM BLOODWORTH (Auckland).

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Sir,—Among the many good things appearing in *The Listener* may I specially comment on the article on *La Prensa* and your editorial on De Gaulle's proposed reform of French newspapers. Freedom of the press, so loudly demanded by newspapermen, does not, as a rule, include deliverance from the tyranny of shareholders or the prejudices of advertisers; these malign influences are denied, with tears of injured innocence, by New Zealand papers, but they exist more or less in all countries, and France has been notorious in this respect. Newspapers ought not to be gagged, but a duly elected government has the right to insist on the publication of certain matter as a condition of granting a licence.

J.F. (Christchurch).

BRUTAL YOUTHS

Sir,—When I saw *Hangmen Also Die* I was shocked by two gangs of youths in the audience making cruel wisecracks at the Czech hostages going to their execution. Why are some New Zealand youths so brutalised?

G.McK. (Maungaturoto).

MORE VARIETY WANTED

Sir,—Surely it is time we had more variety in the programmes from the National Stations. I am tired of chasing all over the dial for something interesting to while away the hours. I suggest that those responsible take a lead from the movies and give us popular programmes. Even the few orchestral "shorts" from the screen have been a dismal failure. Can't we have more and better plays of longer duration with all the music that we need interwoven?

"MODERN MUG" (Coromandel).