

OCTOBER 20, 1944

World Security

THE Prime Minister has said everything that it is safe to say at this stage about the Dumbarton Oaks discussions, namely, that the preliminary proposals have been warmly welcomed by the New Zealand Government. It is not dangerous to add that they have been as warmly welcomed by the New Zealand people; but no student of international politics would risk a more detailed opinion. If the fighting in Europe were over it might be possible to see a little farther into the future, but even then there would be great areas of darkness through which no commentator could yet pick his way with confidence. It has, for example, just been announced that the Prime Minister of Poland has accepted an invitation to join in the discussions in Moscow, and while that is a very encouraging piece of news it is also a reminder of a very desperate problem. A hundred things could still happen in a hundred places to reduce most of what now look like agreements or firm understandings to provocatively new subjects of debate. But caution is one thing and hopelessness another. The situation in general is good—so good that we are afraid to accept it. Politically the tendency still is to look behind instead of ahead; and that can be just as foolish as blind optimism. For there is no longer a danger that the peace will be lost a second time for the same reasons. The victor nations will not fail through following the moon again; through mistaking words for things, or losing themselves in pious aspirations. But they may endanger the peace by refusing to hitch their waggons to any eminence at all, and it is most desirable at this stage that there should be a pause before an attempt is made to tie themselves finally to force alone. If force were not the central fact in their preliminary agreements it would be difficult to have confidence in any of them: the realistic governments of the world would begin at once picking partners for the next upheaval. But it would be just as depressing if justice and friendship and co-operation were not mentioned, and if the blue print of security forgot the rights of the common man.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, OCTOBER 20

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

HOLLAND

Sir,—You would oblige me greatly by publishing this letter in answer to the "Diary of a New Zealander," who believes she has seen Holland. I am a Dutchman who knows my country very intimately, and wish I could have guided your friend instead of leaving her to snobbish, ignorant little Ann. Let me correct some of her wrong impressions.

When Holland was free, the bulb-fields were visited by all "classes," the period of their flowering being a kind of spring festival which even impresses the Dutch every year afresh, and in which young and old, poor and rich, used to participate. What a pity to have wasted time looking at the torture chambers in de Gevangenpoort; if your contributor had walked another 100 yards, she could have seen Holland in the pictures of Rembrandt, Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch in the intimate surroundings of the Mauritshuis. That might have corrected her "erroneous ideas" on Holland better than looking at old thumbscrews, which, after all, can be seen in every Continental museum. Also German cars in Holland were an exception; American cars were the rule.

I am sorry she thought my countrymen "rather inartistic" people. Ann apparently could not tell her that some of them were rather prominent in art, in spite of their looks.

As for the island of Marken, that is an institution made for Americans who "do" Holland with Cooks' Tours in 48 hours. Few Dutch people ever go there. Instead of letting her waste her time there, I should have guided your contributor through the modern quarters of Amsterdam, where masterpieces of our young architects can be seen: de Bazel, Dudok and de Clerq, who made modern Dutch architecture famous in the whole world. Unfortunately Ann was her guide and not I, who could have shown her some of the wealth of my country which now may irretrievably be lost, and, indeed the Holland which she missed become "a place to read of and not to see."—F.S.-r. (Wellington).

DRAMA IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—In your very interesting article entitled "Acting in Self-defence," you quote a member of the Wellington Unity Theatre Group, who in his turn quotes John Gielgud as saying, "... The fashion of successful plays during the last 40 years has always had a tendency towards high life. Wilde and Pinero started it by showing a lot of actors in beautiful costumes looking more like ladies and gentlemen than those who came to see them... with a few exceptions like Priestley, Williams, MacKenzie and Greenwood the playwrights don't give us a chance..."

Now I have no evidence on which to say straightway that to put that in the mouth of John Gielgud is misrepresentation—but I will say I wonder and I doubt. The last 40 years covers the best work of such men as George Bernard Shaw and Somerset Maugham, to name only two—both supreme craftsmen and not concerned with "ladies and gentlemen in beautiful costumes."

John Gielgud is no fool; he knows that in his own lifetime the English theatre has seen *Major Barbara*, *John Bull's Other Island*, *Heartbreak House* and *St. Joan*; and of Maugham: *For Services Rendered* and *Sheppie*. Do any

of these ignore "real human and social problems"? I have an obstinate suspicion that John Gielgud above all would be little concerned about the "social content" of a play. For his own acting or productions he has always chosen the great part in the great play: Hamlet, Richard of Bordeaux, Macbeth, Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*; Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*; and Sheridan's *Rivals*.

Admittedly none of these was written in the last 40 years, but with such a list to his credit, how could Gielgud have said that the scope of the West End stage is limited?

I repeat: I wonder and I doubt.

HASWELL PAINE (Hamilton).

AN AUTHOR'S ROYALTIES

Sir,—Dorothy Sayers did not write her plays as a result of any wish to do either good or evil. She was asked by the Committee of Religious Broadcasting to write them and accepted the commission in the same way that any craftsman or craftswoman will accept a job. She carried out her commission to the best of her ability—and anything she earns is the reward of her conscientious work and skill. The fact that the plays have religious value was not of her choosing. We do not condemn successful Ministers of religion who attain preferments in their professions because of their skill in preaching; nor successful church architects; nor those who make profits from writing tracts and religious books; nor publishers of Bibles. Why then, should profits from plays be in a different category?

E.T.W. (Havelock North).

Sir,—Your correspondent from Waitara seems very anxious to find out what Miss Dorothy Sayers does with her royalties. I would suggest that he (or she) write to Miss Sayers and ask her, that being a more direct, if not quicker, way of finding out than writing to your paper. I am, myself, writing to her care British Broadcasting Corporation, London, England, thanking her for her use of her God-given imagination in helping many of us to realise more fully what the presence of Jesus meant in the days when He was man, and what His unseen presence can mean to us now—and I expect my letter to reach her.—TEMPORARY RESIDENT (Dunedin).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.).

CHILDREN'S SERIALS

Sir,—Goodie-versus-baddie blood and thunder stories are an important emotional outlet for children. As the City Missioner suggested, if a baddie appears in your child's dreams then your child has an unhappy home life. Perhaps the maligned baddie should be praised for drawing attention to the child's mental maladjustment. However, I do not suggest that our radio serials should become as frightful as our fairy tales which abound in such incidents as that of the ugly sister hacking off her toes in an insane endeavour to get into Cinderella's glass slipper.—GOODIE (Auckland).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

J. Scott Macky: Friday, October 20, at 6.15 p.m., and thereafter alternate Fridays, 25 and 31 metre bands.