

Can Such Things Be?

THEY can be, and thousands of us have seen them with eyes long prepared for them. Otherwise we might not have believed our eyes. How could anyone have believed in 1939 that a ship would come to Wellington in 1944 filled with boys and girls who had been on the run for five years and been chased half way round the earth? It has happened. The children are here, more than seven hundred of them, most of them without fathers or mothers. They will have sanctuary here till the world recovers its sanity and its decency, and then perhaps it will be safe, and possible, and kind to let them go home again. But home for most of them will be a place they have never seen before—a new country, a strange landscape, unknown villages and towns. Mercifully many of them will not understand what that means. They were too young when they were driven out to be deeply rooted, and their experiences since will have cured them of homesickness in its ordinary forms. It may even have happened in some cases that homelessness has been its own reward. Being uprooted in body may have meant being uprooted in spirit too, and beyond the power of change to hurt them further. It is to be hoped that it has proved so. But no such influence is at work on the people of New Zealand. As the temporary hosts of these children we ought to find it difficult to keep our hands out of our pockets. If we accept their presence here, and the manner of their coming, as an ordinary incident of war, we insult every father and every mother from the beginning of time. But if we regard it as a challenge to our decency as well as to our charity, something too abominable and too piteous to be thought of without shame, we shall not ask whether we are doing enough to heal their wounds but whether anything could be done that would leave them with more than they should have and ourselves with less. And in the meantime the question none of us dare shirk is what we are doing to bring it about that such things shall never be again.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MEMORIES OF HOLLAND

Sir,—I am exceedingly sorry that I gave offence to a Dutchman. I do not for one moment "believe that I have seen Holland," in the large sense of "seen." I spent four weeks there, and wrote an absolutely honest chronicle of my impressions.

I stayed with a Dutch family "au pair"—in return for hospitality I spoke English to Anne: hence she was my constant companion and guide. But often I ranged round on my own; and then I always went to the Mauritshuis, where I was never tired of looking at Rembrandt's "School of Anatomy," Potter's magnificent "Bull," Vermeer's tranquil, mellow "Delft," and his exquisite "Head of a Girl" hanging in its window recess. I regret that I did not mention this in the extracts from my diary. All my life I shall remember the Mauritshuis, the loveliest art gallery I have been in. I will not need any diary to prompt my memory of Vermeer's "Delft." I shall always see it—golden and tranquil—more able to induce peace than any other picture I have seen.

E.M. (Christchurch).

DRAMA IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—As I am responsible for quoting John Gielgud in Unity Theatre's section of your recent article, "Acting in Self Defence," I feel I should leave your correspondent, Haswell Paine, "wondering and doubting" no longer. In the BBC *Listener* of February 6, 1941, he will find that Gielgud said everything I attributed to him. And since your correspondent has dragged in Bernard Shaw to confirm his "obstinate suspicion" that I have misrepresented Gielgud, he will be a little sad to find this:

"It's true," says Gielgud, "that Shaw made *Pygmalion*, one of his most popular plays, out of a flower girl in Covent Garden, but the flower girl is experimented on by an expert in phonetics, and he turns her out at the end a very presentable young lady. If the experiment hadn't been a success, the play would have been a failure."

And as Mr. Paine says, Gielgud is no fool: neither is Shaw, and groups like People's Theatre, Hamilton and Unity Theatre, Wellington, are following the advice he gave during his visit to this country:

"Amateurs make a hopeless mess of 'modern fashionable comedy.' They should really only try the most serious and weighty plays so that the intelligence in the lines will help them through."

But if this quotation leaves Mr. Paine "wondering and doubting," he will find it on page 24 of the book "George Bernard Shaw in New Zealand."—UNITY THEATRE MEMBER (Wellington).

THE CAUSE OF WAR

Sir,—You printed a talk recently by a Hungarian professor on the causes underlying the Nazi mentality.

It is true that a continued study of the evolution of the individual may lead to such conclusions but, if that were the whole truth, how could the kindly habits of co-operation and the greater virtues of Self-Sacrifice and Devotion to Duty ever have been evolved? My solution is that up till now Biology

has studied only the evolution of the individual which has produced the fleetness and courage and also the beauty of the horse, and has ignored the evolution of the group. It is obvious that in the Struggle for Life the Group is much more important than the individual. A lone wolf would starve in a week or two, a lost sheep would be eaten before morning. It is, therefore, the qualities which enable the group to survive which are the vital ones. The wolf is a cowardly brute. He trusts no one, for he knows that if crippled he will be at once torn to pieces and eaten by his own pack, yet even the wolf has to leap at the throat of the deer or the pack would starve. Even the wolf-pack has to see that the cubs are protected and also that they are allowed a share of the "kill" or the pack would die out. The wild sheep had their ideas of Duty too. The mob drew together with the rams outside and there they faced the wolves. Unless self-sacrifice had been common neither sheep nor wolves could have survived. I maintain that Self-sacrifice and Devotion to Duty were thoroughly established in all animal communities long before our ancestors left the tree-tops. Whatever helped the community was Right. Anything else was "Not Done" and the offender was driven out or destroyed. Kindly habits and consideration for others helped to keep the community together, so these survived. Their origin is probably earlier than that of our backbones.

If we could get the Germans and the Japanese to realise that their science has been one-sided and misleading the problems of the future would be solved.

THOS. TODD (Gisborne).

FOR SUNDAY NIGHT

Sir,—As I sat before my radio this evening after church and tuned in from station to station I was disappointed to find not one programme of sacred music, but the usual plays of any week night such as *Dad and Dave*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sorrell and Son*, etc. I like serials, but better still I like to keep Sunday sacred. I know I cannot stop these programmes, but may I suggest that at least one or two of our stations could put on a hymn request session, which I am sure would be well supplied with requests. It would mean much to the many who would enjoy such a programme.—"A COUNTRY YOUTH" (Rotorua).

ARTISTS OR RECORDS?

Sir,—In reference to the controversy regarding local artists versus recordings, I should like to say that I have heard quite a number of New Zealand instrumentalists and singers whose performances, in my opinion, were relatively of equal calibre to those of overseas artists. It is high time we woke up to the fact that this country possesses musical talent of very high potentiality, and the NBS deserves our grateful thanks for recognising and encouraging it.—L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Songs" (Kawhia): We have made inquiries without getting any favourable answer.
"Query" (Napier): Association (for) Country Education.
"Kotii" (Remuera): Meaningless to us.
"Constant Listener" (Nelson), F. Harkness (Wellington), "Listener" (Whangarei): Appreciated and passed on.