

Mr. Roosevelt Remains

IT is not taking sides in American politics to say that most New Zealanders must have been relieved to hear the result of the Presidential election. Nor is it a criticism of Mr. Dewey. It means simply that in the situation in which the world is to-day most of us prefer the known to the unknown. For it means nothing at all to us in New Zealand that a fourth term is in itself an innovation. That means a good deal in America — so much that millions of Mr. Dewey's votes would be votes against it. But it is an academic question here that we are happy to leave to historians and lawyers. The precedents, the parallels, the complications, and the risks either do not occur to us at all or we are prevented by distance from worrying about them. We do worry about personalities whether our knowledge of them is intimate or sketchy. The war is not yet won; but we know how it is going and will continue to go if the present leaders remain. The peace has not yet been drafted; but here again, though we know less, we know enough to feel sure of the general shape if there are no new draughtsmen. In particular our thoughts linger longer than they have ever done before on our own ocean environment; but we have confidence that solutions will be reached in Washington, Wellington, Canberra, and London, if the same man remains in the White House, that will keep us safe for another generation. So it did not matter much last week whether we were ourselves Right or Left at home: we were for the man in Washington whom we knew and trusted and regarded as an essential member of the international combination to whose music most of us are marching. Nor did it matter either if we identified the political divisions in the United States with those with which we are ourselves familiar, supposing that the Republicans were Right and the Democrats Left. Though it is desirable in general to call things by their proper names, a shovel and a spade are both agricultural implements.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

NEW ZEALAND SPEECH

Sir,—Professor Ian Gordon says that "for the average person in the equalitarian atmosphere of the Dominion, standard English is something very difficult to achieve." He also says that "with careful education it is possible." Why should the education of our children be careless? Many parents think it necessary to provide their children with elocution lessons while they are attending primary and secondary schools to correct speech, an expensive hobby with a large family! But if speech training, verse-speaking, and harmony could be given at an early age by experts, a sense of appreciation would be developed—a good foundation on which to build. There would also be an enormous saving of uphill work for those training for stage, politics, church, and broadcasting and lecturing. I think listening in to the House of Representatives gives us much food for thought.

Climatic conditions of the Dominion are said to be conducive to the production of beautiful voices. Let us see to it

Notice To Correspondents

The Editor cannot give reasons for the rejection of any letter, or of any portion of a letter. The commonest causes of rejection are, however, these: (1) Letters are too long. (2) They deal with unsuitable subjects (party politics, for example, or religious sectarianism). (3) They are actionable. (4) They are lacking in courtesy. (5) They are disguised advertising. (6) They are copies of letters sent to other publications.

that our children develop their birth-right to its utmost. We have the beautiful Maori voices, as an example—with the beautiful English spoken by the well-educated Maori. Can we not combine the best from the new and the old world and prove that an equalitarian atmosphere is conducive to culture?

A MOTHER (Hawke's Bay).

TALL TALES

Sir,—Your article on Paul Bunyan was very interesting. But why express amazement that such a giant of strength should be a modern production? I think the "tall story" is still a popular one and in camp life anyhow is still the best way to put an end to some boaster. Probably when some logger was wearying the bunkhouse boys with his wonderful chopping feats, someone would tell a Paul Bunyan story that only another Paul Bunyan story could beat.

The shearers of Australia and New Zealand are not to be outdone by loggers in U.S.A. or Canada in imaginative capacity. Stories of the "Speewaa" Station pass all limits (if there are any) of extravagance. The number of sheep on the "Speewaa" Station ran into millions, and the boss of the shearing board had to have a coach and horses to go from end to end on his rounds. Crooked Mick could shear a sheep in a couple of blows, and he had to have a 400-gallon water tank to keep his shears cool. His eating habits could not be met by his coupons to-day, for a story is told that two rouseabouts on the "Speewaa" got smothered while tunnelling into the plum duff looking for currants. Sometimes Crooked Mick had a mate named Taihape Jack, who also ate well; reports vary as to the number of chops he had for breakfast,

but they were far more than one sheep could provide. It may be that Crooked Mick's exploits are fading in their popularity in the sheds of to-day, but some of the "old hands" could tell you some of the wonderful tales told in the days when they did the round of the sheds.—J. STEPHENS (Mosgiel).

THE BASIC ENGLISH-MAN

Sir,—

Mr. Graham Enting has the thing the wrong way round.

To rejoice in last week's "Listener" (with sour sarcastic sound)

That speaking Basic English is the Englishman's monopoly,

Whereas, of all the tribes from Tarascon to Trichinopoly,

Who speak the tongue of Shakespeare should be least enthusiastic

For this synthetic salad-speech—this sort of verbal plastic.

If you learn another's language with perspiring puff and groan,

You will find it perfect Hades to emasculate your own!

For years you've known the sentence shaped, the words at ease and vivid,

Alive, familiar, flexible. And now must all turn livid?

Grey, chilly, disarticulate, chopped up and stuck together,

Resembling nothing closer than the basic English weather?

A mess? a babu-journalese? a jargon and a paste?

Not so much Basic English as the English tongue debased?

No, sir; the thing can never be. The Briton will turn jingo,

And Old English monosyllables restore his ancient lingo.

In short, of all ethnology from Inch to to Ispahan,

Least fit for Basic English is the basic English-man!

(Music by Sullivan)

J. G. A. POCKOCK (Christchurch).

October 27, 1944

A CIVILISED WAGE

Sir,—Permit me to make some comments on your leading article "A Civilised Wage." G. B. Shaw seems to think that greatness is nurtured in luxury. If I have read the New Testament aright the founder of Christianity began his mission after 40 days in the wilderness on fresh air and water. I also seem to have some recollection of a famous Greek philosopher who for a time at least resided in a barrel. No doubt in past times individual wealth was necessary to the progress of scientists and others, but in these days when opportunity is collectively placed at the disposal of all with ability, for instance by public libraries, technical schools, bursaries for the higher professions, etc., the necessity for a large financial backing does not exist and those with ability may succeed without it. G.B.S. also hopes there will be no levelling down. To attain a classless society this will be necessary. To quote John the Baptist, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain brought low." This suggests to me that the levelling must be done from both directions.

J. T. ROE (Opotiki).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

We have not been able to trace the tune. It is from some light operatic piece, but our music department cannot locate it.—Ed.).