

# BOOKS BURN BUT DO NOT DIE

(Written for "The Listener" by  
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WHEN Demetrius attacked the city of Rhodes, Protogenes was painting a picture. "This," says Pliny, "hindered King Demetrius from taking Rhodes, out of fear lest he should burn the picture; he was pleased rather to spare the painting than to take the victory which was already in his hands." Protogenes, when asked why he continued to work in the midst of his enemies, made the reply that he understood the war was against the Rhodians and not against the Arts.

Other times, other manners! The modern artist no longer nourishes any such conception. But, even though they have been prepared for it, artists, book-lovers, scholars and the general public no less, will be astounded when the full losses to culture and the records of civilisation from the present warfare are totalled up. Some of the destruction has recently been assessed, and libraries in Britain have already begun to think about replacement of their stocks. Negotiations were opened recently for enlisting American help in making good these losses.

## We May Be Asked to Help

Fortunately, both rare books and manuscripts can be photographed and reproduced, and the microfilm technique is capable of greater exploitation. New Zealand may yet be called upon to assist in this direction, for the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington contains many volumes which before the war ranked as among the rarest in the world, and some of them may now conceivably be the last remaining copies. An inter-Allied book centre is soon to be opened in London. Among other activities, it will house the books rescued by the Book Recovery Committee from salvage drives. Already, a Books Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Ernest Barker has made a valuable survey of the books destroyed.

No full list has been compiled of all the valuable works destroyed in Britain during the past five years. Some libraries, like that of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, not only lost their books but also their catalogues and records. In such cases it is obviously difficult, if not impossible, to compute the precise extent of the losses.

Nevertheless, the authorities are now in a position to indicate in what directions British literary culture, in a general way, has suffered most. The British Museum, for example, lost all its books on the ballet, many liturgies, tracts, and foreign sermons, besides a valuable collection of early cookery recipes. Other classes of books that British libraries would welcome, according to a special report just issued, include titles in military, international, and German and Russian law, sets of the



A human chain worked to save books when the retreating Germans set fire to the Palais de Justice, Brussels.

*Gentleman's Magazine*, and publications of the Camden and Genealogical Societies. Some libraries require new sets of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and a complete *Murray's New English Dictionary*.

## Some Missing Volumes

Among specific books that have been lost are copies of Gould's *Birds of Different Countries*, Pastor's *History of the Popes*, and the first edition of Raleigh's *History of the World*, together with the 1552 edition of the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus. Definitive editions of Goethe, Hugo, and Baudelaire are also required for some blitzed libraries, while others have need of the works in the history of medicine, domestic science, archaeology, architecture, and handicrafts.

To the ruthless destruction of centuries-old books, manuscripts, archives and works of art in Britain must be added the wanton destruction in other countries of Europe, such as the deliberate setting on fire with hand-grenades of 200,000 books, from every country of the world, in the Royal Society's building at Naples and the burning by the Germans of archives dating back for centuries in the Naples University, after they had first been saturated with petrol.

In the first few months of war, part of the National Archives in Warsaw

were carried away to Germany, and 100,000 volumes relating to education, the Treasury archives, and 120,000 volumes relating to official matters and agricultural plans were lost to the world. The fixed plan of devastation was later extended to every occupied country. The Germans destroyed the Rostov Library, containing three million books, partly destroyed the Kharkov University Library, which had contained 20,000 volumes, and burned the University's complete newspaper archives.

## Four-day Purge of Libraries

In Paris, the Gestapo swept the shelves clean of all anti-Nazi writings and much historical and philosophical literature. A four-day purge of public and private libraries took place in Alsace in December, 1941, with the books destined for a ceremonial bonfire. Not only did the Germans "purge" the great Bibliothèque Nationale, but they are also reported to have demanded, and received, an inventory of manuscripts and rare books stored elsewhere in France for security. Their policy took effect early in the last war when, in 1914, the Germans occupied the town of Louvain in Belgium and set alight to the University Library, but even earlier, in 1870, we find them, during the siege of Strasbourg, setting fire to that city's world-famous library.

But books are difficult material to wipe out altogether. Church and State

# HE GIVES THE PUBLIC WHAT IT LIKES

## Fred Hartley For ABC

FRED HARTLEY, who is due to arrive in Australia soon to supervise light music for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, is considered by fellow-musicians to be the only man in Britain who can put on music that appeals equally and consistently to both young and old, to dance enthusiasts and elderly fireside listeners.

The music he plays (says the *ABC Weekly*) ranges from Puccini to Eric Coates and Cole Porter. He doesn't go in for hot jazz, but includes novelty dances such as "Chicken Reel" and "The Irish Washerwoman." As well as orchestrating and broadcasting other people's music, Hartley does a lot of composition himself, some of it under the name of Iris Taylor.

His own instrument is the piano, but he has studied violin, viola and 'cello, and though he doesn't play them, musicians say he has "everything under his fingers" when he comes to write for strings. It is possible to play any Hartley composition, they claim, because he writes with actual, not merely theoretical, knowledge of the capabilities of the instrument and the performer.

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authorities discovered this when they endeavoured to destroy heretical books by means of public bonfires, and, as John Hill Burton says, "in the end it was found easier and cheaper to burn the heretics themselves than their books."

The piecing together of our knowledge again after the war will be not altogether without its fascinating side, reminiscent of the ancient days in China when the conceited Emperor Chihuang-ti, who wanted history to begin with his name, had all the writings burned. Eleven years later, when they had got rid of the tyrant, the scholars set about the task of committing to writing again the great classics which they had been teaching and memorising secretly by word of mouth. They were helped by the new Emperor Hiau Wu, who ordered a search for old copies of manuscripts buried under floors or tucked between walls, and delightful tales are told of that inspired search, with legends of people being directed to unimagined hiding-places by fairy music. When the long task of re-establishing the old texts was completed, it was decided to put the valued histories for ever beyond the power of vandal emperors. The books were engraved on great tablets of stone. Sermons in stones, indeed!

New Zealand has been fortunate, in that not only have the national archives and libraries in this country escaped the hand of destruction, but also that this country's valuable war archives in the Middle East have come through almost without a single loss.