

## Farmers And The World

**R**EADERS of our interview with Mr. G. S. Browne, reported on Page 8 of this issue, will notice that he was embarrassed whenever it was necessary to say plainly what the mission of his party really was. It was not easy for him to tell us, in two or three words that the farmers of Britain have become internationalists; though it was proved by their visit to New Zealand. Similarly it was not easy for our own farmers to accept that explanation at its face value: they received it, gave it uneasy approval, and even passed a resolution associating themselves with it; but there was embarrassment on both sides. One reason was that international is a difficult word in a world at war. It is not easy to call your neighbour your brother when your plan is to kill him before he kills you. But the chief reason was the difficulty of advancing an idealistic philosophy that was at the same time such obviously good business. We don't blush when we say that honesty is the best policy—we have said it so often. But we hesitate to say that unselfishness is the best policy, though that is what these farmers came from Britain to tell us. They came to say that the farmer's job all over the world is to feed the people, and that this means more than producing the food; that a narrow, selfish, short-sighted view by the world's producers may lead to gluts in some places and starvation in others; and that they had "dedicated themselves to the task of achieving equitable distribution." But they were too honest to say that their sole motive was to feed the hungry. The hungry had to be fed, they said, if they were to remain peaceful and become economically efficient, with living standards that would mean a steady demand for farm produce. But farmers dedicate themselves with difficulty. They are not good evangelists, and they feel uneasy if a hymn-book is put in their hands and they are asked to join in the singing. They did join in, and as time goes on they will join in more heartily, but they are a shy and hesitant choir in the meantime.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### VAN LOON'S BOX

**W**E have had a whole budget of letters in reply to a question by a correspondent, "Anticipation," about the possibility of packing all the people in the world into a half-mile-square box. Here are a few:

Sir,—Hendrik Van Loon was right if "Anticipation's" population figure was correct. Volume of one man, 6ft. x 1ft. x 1½ft. = 9 c.ft.

Volume of world population (1,700,000,000) = 15,300,000,000 c.ft.

Volume of box, ½ mile x ½ mile x ½ mile =

$\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{8}$

2640ft. x 2640ft. x 2640ft.

= 18,399,744,000 c.ft.

Which leaves 3,099,744,000 c.ft. for packing. COMPUTER (New Plymouth).

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Sir,—I think "Anticipation" has taken into account only two dimensions, i.e., he has tried to pack his people into an area half a mile square, whereas the statement means a cubical box—half a mile square and half a mile in height. The total volume of this box is approximately 18,400,000,000 cubic feet, and the total volume of the world's population reckoned on the above figures, is 15,300,000,000 cubic feet. Hence the statement is correct.—SARDINE-TIN SAM (Lower Hutt).

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Sir,—The statement that the entire world's population could be packed into a box with half-mile sides is well on the safe side. With the dimensions of the given human being at 6ft. by 1½ft. by 1ft., the volume per head is 9 cubic feet. Half a mile is 2640ft., which cubed, gives 18,399,744,000 cubic feet. This divided by 9 gives 2,044,416,000 as the number that could be packed in said box, quite an increase on the estimated population of 1,700,000,000.—PUZZLE FAN (Ohinewai).

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Sir,—Packed in 6ft. layers, on top of each other, such a box would hold 2000 million people more than the present population of the world. If, however, the world's population were assembled on a square parade ground, with each person occupying a space of 1½ square feet, then this parade ground would measure 10 miles by 10 miles, with an area of 100 square miles. Alternatively, if the parade ground were circular, it would have a radius of about 6 miles, to accommodate the world's population.—THOMAS A. F. STONE, B.E., A.M.I.M.E. (Auckland).

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Sir,—I coaxed my husband into wading through the maze of figures involved in the Van Loon problem. He says that a cubical box one half mile each way would have a content of 681,472,000 cubic yards; that the cubic content of a population of 1,700,000,000 (each 6ft. x 1½ft. x 1ft. in size) would be 566,666,666 yards, leaving a space of 114,805,334 cubic yards, or room for 344,416,002 people in our big box.—DAIKA KATILA (North Auckland).

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Sir,—If each person in the world measures 6ft. by 1½ft. by 1ft., then each person's volume is 6 x 1½ x 1 c.ft. = 9 c.ft. Hence the volume of the world's total population is 9 x 1,700,000,000 c.ft. = 15,300,000,000 c.ft. The sides of a box having this volume and hence capable of containing the earth's population could measure the cube root of 15,300,000,000—i.e., 2482ft. Now half a mile is 2640ft., hence actually a box measuring less than one half a mile in either direction would suffice.—"VARSITY STUDENT" (Miramar).

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Sir,—A person measuring 6ft. x 1½ft. x 1ft. = 1.3 c.yds. If there are 1,700,000,000 people, this equals 566,666,666 c.yds. of people. A box measuring half a mile in each direction, 880 x 880 x 880yds. contains 681,472,000 c.yds. Thus "Anticipation" will see that 1,700,000,000 people could be put in a box half a mile square and still leave room for 114,805,334 c.yds. of people.—A. M. WRIGHTSON (Warkworth).

### MUSIC FOR ALL TASTES

Sir,—The trouble about classical music is that, although comparatively few want it, these few want it very badly indeed," wrote your critic in "Viewsreel" last week (January 8). He goes on to complain that holiday time (and he could have added every week-end) provides very little musical fare

for those whose taste is "highbrow." I heartily agree with him, though the few are perhaps more than he thinks (witness the overcrowded chamber music and luncheon concerts last winter).

I think there is a simple remedy for satisfying the taste of both the sophisticated ones and of the others; it would also do away with the excuse of the programme-organisers that they have to please all kinds of taste. We have three or four broadcasting stations in the main centres. Why not convert one of them (2YC in Wellington, for example) into a "highbrow station," which would limit itself to broadcasting "classical" programmes in the widest sense: i.e., serious music (classical and modern), talks on literature, art, etc.? 2ZB and 2YD cater for the "lowbrow," 2YA mostly for the "middlebrow" (but not on Saturdays, when its programme is identical with the two above-mentioned stations). Why, then, victimise a highbrow-minority which in a democratic country has a right to be taken into consideration, too? Anyone not finding these programmes to his or her taste would not be compelled to listen to "this kind of stuff," but could tune into other stations which would be more to his liking.

For the "chosen few" this new arrangement would be a great delight. It also would make it unnecessary to interrupt Beethoven's Pathétique in the middle of a movement in order to broadcast racing results. Has ever a race meeting commentary been interrupted—I wonder—for the broadcasting of a sonata or a symphony?—HIGHERBROW, AND PROUD OF IT (Wellington).

### CHRISTMAS, 1914

Sir,—I was very much interested in reading the account of the "truce in 1914" written for *The Listener* by Harold Miller. I was an eye-witness of that truce, but it commenced some hours earlier. The Germans of those days were very religious, and on Christmas Eve they started to place lighted candles on the parapet of their trenches. We immediately started to snipe them out and, as we were a sharpshooting regiment, we were very successful. At the time we were holding a position at Chapelle d'Armentiers and the enemy was only 80 yards from us. It was a most peculiar sight to see the candles burning, and there was a band in the front line playing carols.

I might mention that the Germans were much more up-to-date than we were. They had a motor pump working all the time to keep their trenches dry, while we had one old manual pump, which kept the water to a little above our knees. We received all the water the Germans pumped out. So they were in comparative comfort. But they did not like us sniping their candles out.

After some time, one German called out "come over and have some bread and cheese, Tommy." Now our sergeant-major's batman had found the rum issue, and had imbibed very freely. He heard the offer to "come over," and before anyone could stop him, he was "over the top." To our surprise, a German soldier came over half-way, and we saw them shake hands. Word was passed along to stop firing at the candles, and in less than no time, the

whole battalion was over and shaking hands. The Germans were Saxons, and they said to us "we are Saxons, you are Anglo-Saxons, we are friends." They brought over cigars, chocolate and other loot, which was enjoyed by all, and we helped them to bury a number of their dead who had lain between the lines for some time. We offered them a game of football, but a German staff officer came over and smilingly told us that that could not be allowed, but told us that we could play behind our own lines. He also warned us not to go near their wire entanglements or we would be taken prisoner. He was rather a sport, for the day before his red cap could be seen, and one of our snipers had hit the sniping plate through which this officer was observing 15 times with as many shots. He congratulated the man on his shooting. At midnight we all moved back to our own trenches, but before dawn on Christmas Day we were together again. Even the brigadier-general came up, but he had an artillery man's cap and jacket on. We had a game of football behind our lines and altogether "a good time was had by all."

The next day was different. Before dawn, a call came over "keep down, Tommy." We did, but one young officer climbed on top and started whistling a German tune. A call came over "get down, Tommy." He took no notice. Several shots were fired at his feet to warn him. He was too young to take warning. Eventually, one shot hit him in the groin. He was dragged in then. And so ended our wonderful Christmas truce. For the regiment on our right, though, the truce carried on for six weeks, and then only ended when our machine-gun officer threatened to fire on both sides. They were actually using the same farm to draw their water.—S. McDONALD (President, Wellington branch Old Contemptibles Association).

### DIVORCE IN SERIALS

Sir,—I listened to a story from 2ZB in which divorce was thrown out as a bait to attention. Instead of the usual story of a lover deserting his poor wife for another woman, this story showed a vindictive, revengeful wife and a happy ending for the lovers.

Because the basic factor of interest in novels, films and radio dramas is self identification with heroes and heroines, I suggest that such stories are extremely dangerous. A person of weak will who will flout social standards to break up a marriage is likely to clutch at any suggestion that is likely to offer self-justification. Granted, this particular episode might not have a far-reaching effect, but what if the topic of divorce were to drop out of our radio serials. Films and light literature? If it was not frequently thrust before young people, and if happy restoration of the married state could be achieved when it was dragged into the story, surely the psychological effect would be more beneficial to society than the psychological effect of such stories as I have just heard. So much is presented in radio serials that portrays happy family life that sufficient of this and less of divorce must in time have definite effect for good in society.—MINOR (Wellington).

### ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

E. Smythe (Christchurch): We are sorry, but we have not got the information you asked for.