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Mrs. Fraser

THE death of Mrs. Fraser was more than a blow to the Prime Minister, though that was its first and most tragic effect. Mrs. Fraser before her last illness began had become a Dominion figure and it is not therefore straining words to say that her death was a national as well as a personal calamity, and that we shall be lucky if it has no national consequences. For she was not merely the wife of the Prime Minister. As long as she had her health she stood between him and many of his most exhausting distractions—a shield, a counsellor, a wife, and a courageous defender of his faith. It is a grave loss to him and therefore to Cabinet and Parliament that all these unreported services should now have ceased. The life of a Prime Minister today is more dangerous than that of a king used to be. In a truly democratic country it is almost impossible for him to escape overstrain and overwork. Only one New Zealand leader this century has been able to retire from office with his health unshaken, the physical story of the others—Seddon, Massey, Ward, Savage—being almost unrelieved tragedy. How to escape the physical consequences of leadership no Prime Minister has yet discovered, but Mrs. Fraser knew part of the secret, and it is a melancholy thought that she did not know or would not acknowledge what her vigilance demanded of herself. But it is more profitable to recall the things she did know, did acknowledge, and did without ceasing—exhibit charity, tact, and simplicity. She was one of the very rare people who can meet kings and commoners, cooks and dukes, on exactly the same terms. Many people can do it now and again, but she did it always, and it is not sufficient explanation to say that she was naturally humble. She was. But she was also naturally proud—too proud either to fawn or dominate, and too earnest and wise for any kind of pretence.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

PORTRAIT OF COMMUNISM

Sir,—I had no desire to make any further contribution to the correspondence regarding your editorial on Communism, but one item in your footnote to G. H. Sorrell's letter on the subject must be commented upon.

Mr. Sorrell's letter implied, quite correctly, that if a non-sectional journal editorially attacks a political Party, that Party should be granted a "full right of reply." In your footnote, you described Mr. Sorrell's letter as "foolish and ill-informed," partly because it implied that you had "refused Communists the right of reply," whereas the truth was in fact "that every letter sent to you by Communists in reply to the article had been published or accepted for publication."

I have no doubt that this is the truth, but it is nevertheless something approaching a half-truth. As I pointed out

entirely. Ages of performers range from 7 to 14. The only outside assistance is an orchestra; all costumes and scenery are made on the school grounds by people closely connected with the school. The school has produced nine different operas and the standard of performance is very high.

L. K. PARKES (Hamilton).

"MISTAKEN JOURNEY"

Sir,—I can no longer restrain the impulse to place on record my heartfelt disapproval of the uninteresting drivel contained in your serial, "Mistaken Journey."—J. G. MILLAR (Auckland).

BEFORE OR AFTER?

Sir,—Acting on the request of many keen radio listeners and myself, I wish to offer a suggestion that all recordings, especially classical, be announced after

station is a commendable one. Racing is of Dominion-wide interest and requires a strong station to secure the necessary coverage. News broadcasts are heard from all stations and if an alternative station had to take over the broadcast in one centre there would be no inconvenience.—SPIELPLATZ (Hamilton).

Sir,—Some of your readers seem very touchy. "T.C." merely wants to know why the almost hourly records of stale news should interrupt a race broadcast, and the issue becomes confused by other writers attacking him for trying to sabotage the war effort, not knowing there is a war on, etc. I fail to see the connection.

In our household we never listen to a news broadcast, a commentary, or any war programme. Neither do we listen to Parliament. We keep the radio solely as a means of entertainment, and get all the war news and other information from the daily papers and other printed matter. Maybe we get our news an hour or two later by this system (does it matter?) but I defy anybody to show how we are retarding the course of the war by not listening to the radio news broadcasts. Personally, I think these news broadcasts are very much overdone. One in the morning, and another at evening, should be enough for anybody. If 90 per cent of them were cut out (and 100 per cent of the so-called commentaries) I would be the first to say "Good riddance." We got through the last war quite well without them. The spoken word can never replace the written word, BACKFIRE (Hawera).

Sir,—It appears that the Race Commentary v. War News controversy has cropped up once again. A few statistics on the subject might interest readers and give "R.A.F." and "M.E.R." food for thought. Twelve New Zealand radio stations broadcast news, etc., no fewer than 30,100 times in a year (this figure includes London news, newsreel and commentary, Sunday night talks, and those crude and sordid little propaganda dramas, "The Living Theatre").

The number of times that race commentaries could replace the news in the course of a year would of course be less than 52, as it is only at noon on Saturdays that one coincides with the other, thus leaving more than 30,000 war broadcasts to give those favouring this form of radio entertainment their 25 shillings' worth. I should say that this would still be giving them a return for their money, in proportion to those who would prefer racing commentaries.

There seems to exist a school of thought that resents the fact that the war has not ravaged New Zealand. "Count your blessings" they keep on saying. "But if you happen to be a racing enthusiast, you should not make the best of them."

TEE-ESTEE (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

D.D.H. (Invercargill): Our information came from London. Aren't you being unkind to Mr. Handley?
"Thomas Fan" (Cisborne): Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, U.S., 1891.
"Mount Egmont": The book is "Paul Clifford" and the author Lord Lytton.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT

If the subscriber who telephoned asking for details about "We are the boys from way down under . . ." will send us his name and address we can satisfy his curiosity.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Janet Fraser



Spencer Digby photograph

WE regret to record the death last week of Mrs. Janet Fraser, wife of the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. P. Fraser, after an illness extending over several months. Her health failed soon after her return last year from an arduous trip to the United Kingdom with Mr. Fraser. She entered Lewisham Hospital, but did not regain her former strength. During the war years Mrs. Fraser took an active part in all forms of women's war effort, and did not spare herself at any time. Her social life in Wellington for very many years was very largely occupied with work for the promotion of the health and welfare of all sections of the community, particularly women and children.

in my previous letter, it is quite impossible for anyone to reply adequately in a short letter to such manifold allegations as were made in the article and editorial. The only fair method of "granting a right of reply" in such cases is surely to allow one responsible member of the Party equivalent space in which to answer in detail the various allegations.

In the belief that you would agree with this view, I wrote an appropriate article and forwarded it to you. You will recall that you returned it promptly with a short note to the effect that "our Correspondence Page is the readers' forum, and letters at present must be brief."

RONALD L. MEEK (Wellington).

[Mr. Meek has exercised his right of reply, and this correspondence is now closed.—Ed.]

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN FOR SCHOOLS

Sir,—Your correspondent C. A. McLaren has an excellent idea in suggesting that every school produce a Gilbert and Sullivan opera each year. There is a preparatory school in Hamilton which has produced a Gilbert and Sullivan opera annually since 1922. Boys take all the parts, choruses number about 25, and each opera is performed in its

each recorded item instead of before. Most listeners "tune in" when a recording has started, and attracted by some special piece (the name of which is unknown) are most aggravated when the announcer does not give the name. If this could in some way be rectified without causing undue inconvenience, it would be very much appreciated.

J. ARNOLD (Nelson).

RACE BROADCASTS

Sir,—The number of broadcasts of war news to which one listens is not the yardstick by which one's recognition of the significance and importance of the world struggle is measured. That point appears to be missed by "R.A.F." and "M.E.R." To take an interest in racing as a booster of morale and to place the war temporarily out of mind is surely not the crime suggested by those correspondents. It is better than to hang incessantly on every word of news broadcasts, which, after all, are numerous and largely repetitious. Regarding the remarks made on the value of racing in these days, I always think the best answer to critics of wartime racing is the fact that a couple of seasons ago the leading stake-winner in England was His Majesty the King. "T.C.'s" suggestion that race commentaries should take precedence over war news from a YA