

MAY 25, 1945

Footling the Bill

IT always happens, when a large number of people tell the same story, that discrepancies creep in, and some absurdities. It has happened in all our War Loan campaigns. Some have spoken as if failure to subscribe meant the immediate and unnecessary death of one or more New Zealand soldiers. Others have argued (with the same emphasis and a little more absurdity) that the course of the war is not affected at all whether we give or don't give. The fact of course is that very few people know what happens when they buy a war bond or authorise the transfer of credit from themselves to the State, and no loan would ever be raised if we had first to be taught these mysteries. After all very few people know what happens when they start a car or turn a radio knob, but they confidently do these things as often as they wish to travel or be entertained. Technical matters must usually be taken on trust by non-technical people, and the details of national and international finance are in that category. But we do not sit in the dark because we do not fully understand how moving a switch can flood a room with light. We risk an act of faith. Most of us know a little more about money than we know about light, but if we knew nothing at all but how to count it our ignorance would not justify a wait-and-see attitude to the war loan. That is not a risk, but an obligation, and to refuse to contribute because we do not agree with everything said in the course of the campaign is like pleading not guilty to an offence we have plainly committed because there is a mis-spelling in the indictment. We do not escape that way: we sometimes pay a bigger penalty: and we shall certainly pay in more painful ways if we refuse the opportunity to finance the war by lending instead of by giving. It may not be easy to follow our pound all the way from our pocket to a parachute or a slit-trench; but it is easy to know what happens if it stays in our pocket. It comes out of the pocket of someone else from whom we steal our own security.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS**MUSTERERS AND SHEEPMEN**

Sir,—Your reviewer of *The New Zealand Geographer* writes "it is doubtful if there were ever such romantic figures in the Canterbury foothills as the author has found there." I assure you the sheepmen and musterers are living fact, not dead fiction. Your reviewer also notes "and certain that most musterers are not 'little men, almost weedy'"; it would be fairer for him to have quoted in, not out of context: "most musterers are little men, almost weedy in city clothes." Sometimes a man's stature seems to increase when he is loping across a shingle face, or leaning in jest on a mustering pole.—JOHN PASCOE (Wellington).

FROM WAGNER TO WALTZING MATILDA.

Sir,—Some days ago I settled down into a comfortable chair, and, with an anticipatory smack of the lips, prepared to enjoy what was announced as "A short recital by Marjorie Lawrence." There are very few people who sing Wagner really well, and Miss Lawrence is one of them. I wondered what she would sing. There were those two grand recordings of hers from "The Valkyrie," and that aria of Elsa's from "Lohengrin"—but I forgot—Miss Lawrence is an Australian. She sang "Waltzing Matilda"! This she followed with some drivelling ballad whose name I have forgotten, but which somehow brought back memories of Sunday School concerts. But what surprised me more than the criminal waste of a great voice was the fact that she didn't sing either of them very well, indeed, not half so well as the young Aussie who once shared my tent, and gave a nightly performance of "Waltzing Matilda" and "The Road to Gundagai" on his return from the wet canteen. True, they were his entire repertoire, but his renderings were much more convincing than those of his great compatriot.

There are dozens of similar examples. There is Gracie Fields, a first-class comedienne, whose recording of "Ave Maria" is anything but humorous. It's pathetic. And of course, there's Mr. Crosbie, good old Bing, the only crooner who doesn't give me an attack of war neurosis, and he needs must sing "Holy Night." Nor are the great ones guiltless. I can remember once writhing in agony while Elisabeth Schumann swooped and scooped and howled her way through that lovely old ballad "The Banks of Allan Water." Indeed, my feelings so got the better of me that I bet some of my friends half-a-crown then and there that I could sing it better myself. I didn't win my bet, but you may judge the worth of the recording when I tell you that they gave me sixpence and the odd sausage roll at supper time. And I could mention Gigli, whose rendering of "Ombra mai fu" evoked from an old gentleman who was listening the mild remark: "I don't know what you thought, but I didn't like it, and I don't think Handel would have liked it either." EULENSPIEGEL (Kelburn).

NEW ZEALAND CALLING.

Sir,—Referring to the appropriateness or otherwise, of Aunt Daisy's being included on just one of the Pacific programmes, your correspondent has overlooked the fact that we have considerable numbers of Waifs over there, too, and that the 2½ minutes' broadcast

allotted to Aunt Daisy was addressed primarily to them. The alleged "recipe" given was the old joke on "How to Preserve a Husband," which, though it may miss being humorous, can hardly be called sentimental. Here it is:

Be careful in your selection. Do not choose too young. When once selected, give your entire thoughts to preparation for domestic use. Some insist on keeping them in a pickle, others are constantly getting them into hot water. This may make them sour, hard and sometimes bitter. Even poor varieties may be made sweet, tender and good by garnishing them with patience, well sweetened with love and seasoned with kisses. Wrap them in a mantle of charity. Keep warm with a steady fire of domestic devotion, and serve with peaches and cream. Thus prepared, they will keep for years.

T.J.C. (Wellington).

THE ERN MALLEY HOAX.

Sir,—Your recent article on the Ern Malley hoax in Australia reminds me that someone asked if there was a similar case in New Zealand. I am in a position to say that there is an Ern Malley in New Zealand, but as his work is still being published, it is not advisable to say anything more about him at present.

SPECTATOR (Wellington).

PELLEAS AND MELISANDE.

Sir,—On Sunday, April 15, 4YA played a recording of "Pelleas and Melisande," by Fauré. On the following Friday the IYA orchestra played "Pelleas and Melisande" accredited to Sibelius. Personally I have never before had any reason to doubt Debussy's claim to "Pelleas," but I am always open to correction. But someone must be wrong. I should appreciate enlightenment.

CAREFUL LISTENER (Timaru).

[It is you who are wrong. Incidental music for Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande* has been written by both Sibelius and Fauré, and Debussy wrote an opera on it.—Ed.]

HARPS AND Highbrows.

Sir,—"Constant Listener" deplures my "highbrow" harp recitals from IYA. I think "Constant Listener" must be one of the many people who dislike the unfamiliar, and so create an atmosphere or tradition which is forever stultifying any new development in musical technique.

The modern harp is now a major solo instrument with a definite specially-written repertoire. Practically all the records imported into this country during the past ten years have been classical or light classical (I am writing of harp records only, of course), not merely the old-fashioned tunes which street corner buskers of the old days made all too familiar. The harp as a solo instrument is not very well known, particularly in this country, therefore the music which modern technique has made possible, seems strange and unsatisfying at a first hearing, but this is no reason to ignore "highbrow" music; rather it is an increased reason why we should listen to harp music with greater sympathy. In the series "On Wings of Music" which I am broadcasting from IYA I am trying to demonstrate the harp's musical range and not insult the instrument by playing meretricious trifles.

WINIFRED CARTER (Auckland).

HOPES AND THE REALITY.

Sir,—Congratulations to the person responsible for the leader "Desperation. Plus" in *The Listener* of April 13. In these times we can afford to exercise a

little tolerance and fair play if only to offset the opposite qualities so blatantly rampant in the world Press of to-day. Incidentally, the fifth last line of your article defines morale as "discipline and belief," and this striking and evocative phrase must serve to justify what follows.

Ever since I became acquainted with the miracle of radio—as late, Sir, as 1934, having tarried over-long in desert places—I have been a fairly assiduous listener, and have hoped that much good might accrue from popular radio. Alas! like writing to the press, this hope falls far short of expectations; so I feel assured that this present plaint must go the way of other efforts to "regulate the Universe."

It would be superfluous to elaborate the subject of popular broadcasting beyond the essentials enumerated by your correspondent Philip A. de G. Howell, to whom likewise congratulations are due for his attempt to stay the tide that is sweeping every-day and every-hour radio through a channel of mud and slime instead of carrying it over a bed of clean sand and hard pebbles, i.e., "discipline and belief." Hence these tears, disillusion and scepticism. The realities of life are not all of them sordid, nor yet unduly exciting. As was said of a great radio enterprise during the first months of the war, we do not want "a masterpiece of selective misrepresentation." We want entertainment, amusement, and instruction in rational doses for rational beings, not opiates for morons. I am just half-listening (one of the penalties of radio and writing synchronised) to a broadcast on our relations with another country. Well, I hope, "they" don't listen in too frequently. However, here comes Sinatra (not the worst of 'em by a long shot) and the cultivated and cultured voice of the announcer tells me it's either Frankie or blankets for OLD RIDIBUNDUS (Broad Bay, Otago).

BACKWARD CHILDREN.

Sir,—I was interested in the review by L. G. Anderson of *Educating Backward Children in New Zealand*. A great deal of interesting data relative to education may be obtained from a study of the results of classes held for candidates for the Air Force and many of the young men who presented themselves for examination by the Air Force examiners were very backward as far as scholastic attainments were concerned and yet these youths after application to studies were able to pass the tests with high marks. Their general intelligence on leaving school would be "below average," yet many of them at the end of their course of studies graduated "above average." What has been the cause of their leaving school in the "below average" classification? The New Zealand Council for Educational Research could with profit seek the answer to the above question.

STUDENT (Invercargill).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A Listener (Christchurch).—Not anonymously.

C.V.—We do it to allow readers in remote places to receive their *Listeners* before the programmes begin.

Veritas (Wellington).—No censorship. A technical interruption only.

Dealer (Waipukurau).—Passed on to appropriate authority.

A.M.G. (Whangarei).—Making inquiries. "One of the Hosts" (Kilbirnie).—Send us the evidence.