

OCTOBER 5, 1945

## Shadows

IT is disappointing when those whose interests are the same become suspicious and quarrelsome. But it need not be alarming. If the discussions of the Council of Foreign Ministers have not been carried on without friction — if "matters," as the Prime Minister said a few days ago, are indeed "very difficult" all over the world — it is well to remember how much more difficult they were a year ago, and that three years ago they seemed almost hopeless. Yet we came through, and we shall come through the present anxieties if we resist depression and panic. We must of course face the facts, which are ugly, and at least potentially explosive. It would be what Mr. Fraser called "hiding things from our own sight" to pretend that the "clashes" of the London Conference began in passing irritation and will end in embarrassed smiles. They express deeply rooted suspicions and conflicts in fundamental policies. It is quite possible that Russia thinks it is democracy to make the material resources of the Balkans freely available to all the people. It is quite possible that the British and American view — that democracy begins in the mind, and cannot exist where there are not free thinking and free speaking — seems to Moscow cant and humbug, and a cloak, if not watched, for dark material manoeuvrings. There is almost no limit to the depth to which misunderstanding may sink on such issues, and to ignore these conflicts or complacently brush them aside would be almost lunatic. But it still remains true that they are conflicts between friends, determined somehow or other to remain friends. Even if we were allies only and not friends — and in the sense in which such words must be used internationally that is not true — we get the facts out of focus unless we continually remember that they are problems of peace and not of war, that the war has been won, and that the present state of Germany was a not impossible fate for Britain as well as for Russia three or four years ago.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## EDITORIAL MANNERS

Sir,—I am with I. D. Campbell! all the way. To busy people you are doing an amazingly uplifting work. Please don't spoil it.  
H. SHAW (Eskdale).

## LANGUAGE IN SERIALS

Sir,—I would like to protest most vigorously against the language used in some of the Radio Serials—"Submarine Patrol," for example. My boy of 12 hangs over the radio listening breathlessly and to please him, I sometimes listen too. On every occasion I have been treated to a spate of so-called Cockney slang (presumably, for it certainly isn't a New Zealand accent) heavily loaded with "flaming, perishing and ruddy." It's bad enough to have to put up with this kind of thing (and much worse) in tram and bus where men no longer seem to care if women have to listen to their hateful conversation—but to have it broadcast over the air, and to listen in embarrassment with one's children, is even worse. Of course we're not obliged to listen, and I'm well aware that my young son has a far wider vocabulary of swearing than this effort. He enjoys his serial, and yet the tacit agreement on decent language in the home is broken in my presence, and most unwillingly on his part. I'm perfectly certain it is possible to create a Cockney character without so much noise and ugly talking.

While on the subject of serials, I would like to ask why we in this country of normally intelligent people without any violent class distinction should swallow unhesitatingly so many class-conscious serials. I will admit I have never been sufficiently interested to follow one from first to last, but I can think of two, now happily extinct, which give a ridiculous and utterly false sense of values. One was "Ravenshoe," the story re-hashed once more, of the heir of a great estate who is brought up as a servant—imagine it, good New Zealanders! And then of course there are endless ramifications and lovely women and the false heir is denounced, etc., etc. I believe this thing ran for months, or maybe its still going the rounds somewhere in New Zealand. The other was even worse: "Tradesmen's Entrance." Whatever is the use of perpetrating such a life—the life of the "lower orders" in a by-gone England in this changing world? Couldn't we have stories of ordinary people, acting not in melodrama, not as pseudo-aristocrats, not as gangsters, but the rich pattern of an ordinary family life. And why make them a joke like Dad and Dave?

H.B.S. (Sumner).

## CUSTOM AND OURSELVES

Sir,—The talk by G. W. Parkyn ("Custom Shapes Our Lives") left me confused and rebellious. It seemed a roundabout way to tell us that environment plays a large part in our character; after all, who does not realise that? Custom is a part of our environment; but Mr. Parkyn has left me hazy as to what is a custom and what is the effect of a custom. My knowledge of anthropology may be weak, but I suspect that Mr. Parkyn has occasionally driven his cart over the horse because the horse

wouldn't go fast enough to win his argument. His illustrations of the Indians would have been more illuminating had he chosen two tribes more nearly akin than the West Coast Indian and the Pueblo. I should think that the Pueblo character would be largely moulded by their warlike neighbours, the Apaches.

Living in Dunedin, Mr. Parkyn must realise that Scottish women have some customs resembling the Canadian West Coast Indians. In a Scottish home, towards the time of a visitor's departure the hostess becomes a little distraught, her eyes wander from cupboard to vegetable garden, and an expression caused by working intricate sums mentally takes possession of her face. Then as she leaves, the guest is presented with a cabbage, a pot of jam, or a cake. The gift can imply that the guest is a dear and that the hostess wishes to shower tangible

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 24-25.

blessings on her, or that for once at least, the guest's family will taste properly-made jam, or that the hostess is no longer beholden to the guest for her gift, which was also capable of being interpreted in several ways. As to Indians burning their wealth to impress or humiliate their guests, no poker-faced Indian could outface Scottish women when they deal with the pride of some erring sister who flaunts her wealth unbecomingly before her less fortunate sisters. But though their customs are similar I dare Mr. Parkyn to say that megalomania is more rife among Otago women than others.

As to saying that individuals cannot alter customs, Mr. Parkyn has left me muddled in regard to what customs are, but I have seen a newcomer to a district alter the habits of the inhabitants in a small way in a comparatively short time, and the saint, the artist, and other intelligent people who have from time to time altered our modes of living have been those who were able to keep their own unity and integrity no matter how adverse or hampering was its environment.

A PICT (Dunedin).

Sir,—I detected a weakness or two in the article by G. W. Parkyn on "Custom Shapes Our Lives." I refer to two excerpts which he quotes with evident approval. In the first, from "Little Golden America" the Indian speaks in the language of European culture: "That's fraud, you're advising me to deceive people. You're advising me to do something dishonest." These are terms which seem to me to connote purely western standards, and therefore are not evidence in support of the main thesis. Secondly, the quotation from "Coming of age in Samoa" seems to simplify overmuch. Surely Samoa must be feeling the same influences as are at work among their Polynesian cousins, the Maori, who is being at present submitted to a tremendous strain, to take only his mental life for example, in finding a substitute for the all important ideas of "mana" and "tapu" that governed his ancient

life. That in the matter of customs regarding sex, the missionaries "have dissented in vain" does not make their dissent "unimportant." It was this same dissent that built up out of peoples living communally a civilisation in which the family unit was substituted for the communal idea, and which provided the best conditions ever produced for the development of the individual. And, by the way, are not the medical officers and the school teachers in Samoa apostles of dissent on behalf of western culture? Samoa cannot remain indefinitely in tribalism. Inevitably, even if it takes time, their customs and culture which have stereotyped them for thousands of years, will yield before western culture, and then they may be glad that their first contact with it was in the exposition of its fundamental values by the missionaries. J. DURNING (Okato).

## BAND PROGRAMMES

Sir,—I too cannot understand why it is our band programmes are practically all military bands. New Zealand has made several attempts at producing a military band, but has failed owing to lack of good material; also, I should say, suitable conductors. A brass band conductor is not a military band conductor. Let us stick to our brass bands. What better music could we have?

BANDSMAN (Wellington).

## PROGRAMMES

Sir,—In reply to a letter written by "Quite Satisfied" I should like to stress the point that, although many of us may be soldiers' wives, we have not all got the time to spend our days and nights listening to all the serials on the radio programmes. For my part I like, on the few occasions I have to listen to the wireless, to turn it on and be assured that some station will have a musical programme.

If "Quite Satisfied" has to depend on her radio for all her entertainment and is not able to get any joy out of her children and her home, there must be something radically wrong.

NOT SATISFIED (Kerikeri).

## FREEDOM OF THE AIR

Sir,—Jack Sherie's "bright disclaimer," frank and humorous as it was, shows him to be at least of an open mind. Let me hasten to assure him that the ranks of Rationalists include most of the greatest scientists, philosophers, and thinkers; so that he will be in good company and need have no fear. He also asks what are the Rationalists, for he says he has a "horrible feeling that he may be one!"

Rationalism, as the word implies, is a belief in a rational or reasonable outlook on life based on human experience, scientific deduction and knowledge, and accepts unreservedly the supremacy of Reason as opposed to theological dogma and superstition. Not so dreadful after all, is it? Mr. Sherie should cultivate the acquaintance of that one Rationalist whom he had never set eyes on before. I feel sure he will find a great friendship awaiting him.

However, my original protest remains ignored, by the NBS, but may one hope that it will reach the proper quarters.

R. HULBERT (Waipukurau).