

APRIL 26, 1946

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:
115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.
G.P.O. Box 1707.
Wellington, C.1.
Telephone 46-520.
Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Anzac Day

IT calls for some courage to celebrate Anzac Day in 1946, but for no more than we require for most of our other solemn occasions. All such observances are acts of faith and, if we cease keeping Anzac Day because we have not in 31 years realised its high hopes, very few holy days will remain on the Calendar. It will soon be 2000 years since the highest hopes of all were held out to us, and no one would suggest that they have yet been realised. But very few suggest that we should cease talking about them or observing the special days that bring them periodically to our minds. We go on hoping, striving, believing that a day will come which justifies our centuries of faith. So it is with Anzac Day, within the limits of its humbler hopes. It was never a victory celebration so much as a memorial and a dedication. If it had been for victory only we could in fact have kept it more easily, since victory is still with us; but we need not lose heart if the hopes with which we first kept it now seem a little vain. No one knows when wars will cease or free men enjoy a free world. We know that millions have died, since the first Anzac Day, to bring these things to pass, and we cannot quite escape the fear that millions more may die in the same cause. But the goal is nearer in 1946 than it was in 1915, since the whole world is now fearfully searching for it. We did not quite know what the first Anzac Day meant—as a man who has never been sick does not know what a sudden and dangerous illness means. But we knew afterwards that we had survived the illness, taken the shock and endured the pain, and we have not ceased in 31 years to search for the cause of such a calamity. Now we have an appalling new reason for looking farther and deeper, and Anzac Day is one of the influences that rally us when we falter.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

A VERSE FOR ANZAC DAY

Sir,—As Anzac Day is approaching and so many parents are in need of comfort for their stricken hearts in the loss of their sons, could you find space for the following extract from the poem "The Flood of Years," by William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878):

"Beyond that belt of darkness, still the years roll on
More gently, but with not less mighty sweep
They gather up again and softly bear
All the sweet lives that late were overwhelmed
And lost to sight—all that in them was good,
Noble, and truly great and worthy of love—
As its smooth eddies curl along their way,
They bring old friends together; hands are clasped
In joy unspeakable; the mother's arms
Again are folded round the child she loved
And lost. Old sorrows are forgotten now,
Or but remembered to make sweet the hour
That overpays them; wounded hearts that bled
Or broke are healed forever. In the stead
Of this grief-shadowed Present, there shall be
A Present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw
The heart, and never shall a tender tie
Be broken."

I have met so many bereaved parents and thought the above might be of help to them.
C.M.L. (Christchurch).

STATION 2YD

Sir,—May I be permitted to comment upon a remark made by "Homey & Co." in your correspondence columns of April 5—namely "Station 2YD is always on rubbish—we could call it by a much worse name."

Such a statement is not merely sweeping—it could be called something much worse. "Homey" may be surprised to learn that the programmes from 3YA which he admires, and takes off his hat to, are usually repetitions of broadcasts that have been featured by 2YD. The latter station has some of the best regular sessions to be heard in New Zealand, and its circle of appreciative listeners is continually augmenting.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

O, TO BE IN ENGLAND

Sir,—That England has a great deal to offer in culture that cannot be got here doesn't need any argument. England has 45 million people and an old civilisation, and she is next door to Europe. These conditions produce centres of learning and the arts, and groups of people interested in them, which it is impossible to develop in a country like ours. There is, however, this danger in comparing the societies, that we may overlook the fact that millions of the people in England are not concerned with these things. It might be said that Britain is inhabited by 45 million people, mostly interested in horse—and dog—racing and soccer. Visitors from the Homeland are apt to make this mistake: accustomed to moving in restricted circles of their own, where T. S. Eliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins and Vincent van Gogh are commonly discussed, they are disappointed and shocked to find as they move about in New Zealand that they don't hear such poets and artists mentioned. What they overlook is that if they moved out of their circles in England they would find just the same amount of ignorance and perhaps more of it. I can assure "One Who Wants to Run Away" that there are quite a number of persons in this country who are interested in Eliot and Hopkins and van Gogh, and what these figures stand for.

There are even some, as there are in England, who are over-interested, and make the too common error of mistaking art for life. I cherish the remark of a young New Zealander who took high University honours in English and distinguished himself as a writer. Speaking of one of his contemporaries he said: "She is the sort of person who asks you at breakfast what you think of T. S. Eliot." This is not a point one can be positive about, because one can't get the necessary statistics, but I feel sure that in proportion to population there are just as many persons in this country who care for literature and the arts as there are in England. Distant hills

More letters from listeners will be found on page 22

may resemble Parnassus, but when we get there we may find the slope dotted with men and women looking for racing tips. Leave New Zealand and go to live in a suburb of London, Manchester or Bradford, or in some small provincial town; what certainty would there be that your neighbours or your business associates would be interested in Eliot, Hopkins or van Gogh? Look at the struggle that cultural periodicals have to live in England. Look at the circulation of a first-class critical journal like *The Times Literary Supplement*. Look at the number of writers and artists and intellectual writers generally who are glad to accept Civil List Pensions. By all means let us strive to go to the Homeland. I struggled to make my own pilgrimage to Mecca, and I would like to see every New Zealander enjoy the same experience. There is a great deal to learn there in every department of life. But let us keep a sense of proportion.
A.M. (Wellington).

Sir,—The "O, To Be in England" controversy has been both irritating and amusing—but no one has pointed out the salient facts, which are:

- (1) New Zealand's pakeha history extends back only 100 years.
- (2) Most of that 100 years has been spent in wresting from nature the wherewithal for food, clothing, and shelter (besides fighting in a few wars).
- (3) New Zealand has a population of under two million.

In the face of these facts, it is not surprising that we have not yet developed a strong and distinctive culture of our own. We are too young and underpopulated. But what is rather surprising is that we lead the world in so many social reforms, I would ask "One who wants to run away" to remember our Plunket system, our free Dental Service to school children, and our Social Security benefits when next she feels compelled to judge us in print. She may have had symphony concerts and ballet and grand opera in China—but did millions of Chinese living on and below the bread line share those delightful things with her? I should not be too disturbed that her Van Gogh print passed unrecognised. I venture to suggest that such a thing could happen in any country in

the world, and in all fairness one should point out that Van Gogh with his often crude outlines and wonderful simplicity is rather a trap for the uninitiated.

I wonder what proportion of all the millions of average working people in Britain or America has ever heard of Van Gogh or Gauguin or Degas—or in the field of literature of Montaigne or Voltaire—or in music of Debussy or Ravel? It is, I think, a matter of proportion. The greater the population—the greater the number of people who know and love the great works of art, music, literature, and the things of the mind. Arnold Bennett called these people "the passionate few." In thickly populated countries and in great cities there are always enough of these people to make their influence felt. In a sparsely populated country like New Zealand our "passionate few" seem very few indeed—and have little effect on the cultural life of our country as yet. But give us time!
JULIA BRADLEY (Upper Hutt).

Sir,—May I express my appreciation of the "O, To Be in England" series of comments on Ronald Meek's article (*Listener*, March 4). I also have no brain to export, so must stay at home of an evening (I live in the country) with my books and music, feeling that loneliness is more honest than compromise, and a crumb of culture better than a cake-eating contest.

But there is no need to blame others for our misfortunes; as "Liberto" says (or quotes), "Each man is his own absolute lawgiver." We can change things if we want to enough.

ALSO IN A DESERT
(Frasertown).

BING AND ANTI-BING

Sir,—The parody (?) written on "Swinging on a Star" by the person whose signature is "The Rustle of Bing" is rather unnecessary and pointless. Where does it get anyone to say they do or they don't like a certain artist? Everyone is entitled to his own views, so why should one biased person try to change the opinion of another? By all means criticise the works of another—if you could do better yourself or even offer a tangible reason for criticism.
S.M.S. (Howick).

Sir,—After reading the poem in *The Listener* sent in by "The Rustle of Bing," New Brighton, I feel there must be a reply to it:

The person who wrote that poem
Was jealous we might have known,
Saying our one and only Bing
Does not know how to sing.

This biggest money-making star
Is our top singer—by far,
Be it classic or be it swing
It's sung with equal ease by Bing.

Maybe our poet wouldn't like to swing on a star
Or carry moonbeams home in a jar,
To do away with Bing seems his wish,
So I guess he must be a fish.

Crosby puts any song through its paces,
Even though he is fond of races,
But he, too, must have his fling—
So I say long live Bing!

"BING'S FAN" (Kaitia).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS
"Marigold" (Lower Hutt): Composer's name given only as Williams. Soloist's name in film not known.
"Subscriber" (Auckland): See article on page 7.