

THAT INDEFINITE DEFINITE ARTICLE

WE went hunting for a little article the other day. It was bashful; it eluded us for some hours. We asked likely authorities if they knew where it hid. They shook their heads, consulted imposing books and documents, and finally gave up the chase on our behalf. We were advised to ask the General Assembly Library about it. We wished we had thought of that first. As quickly as it takes the girl at the cigarette counter to say "No," they tracked it down.

All along we had known that it was something definite we were hunting, though it was its indefiniteness that worried us. And the little article was "The."

It all started through an Auckland correspondent writing to us in this way:



"Others who love the peerage better than they know its ways"

"In announcing our recent distinguished visitors the announcer said: 'The Lord Louis Mountbatten, and the Lady Louis Mountbatten.' Will you please tell me the significance of the article 'the' in each case?"

The announcer, we were told, had acted on advice from the Department of Internal Affairs which deals with these fine points. But when our correspondent raised the issue, a gnawing doubt as to the actual correctness of the "the" crept in, just as the last man to leave the office worries all the way home because he cannot remember if he locked the front door.

So, assuming that Debrett's *Peerage* would know all about it, we asked one of the staff of the General Assembly Library to look up the coy "the." This is what Debrett says: "A practice has arisen during the past few years of styling the younger sons of Dukes and Marquesses 'The Lord (Albert) —,' but this 'the' is presumably an abbreviation for 'The Rt. Hon.', a designation which obviously they are not entitled to."

Supporting Debrett was another authority—*Titles and Forms of Address*,

published by Adam and Charles Black, of London. The Messrs. Black make no bones about it. They say: "Peers and Peeresses below ducal rank are called lord and lady in speech. This brings us to a mistake quite commonly made in connection with the lower grades of the peerage. Although it is correct to talk of the Duke and Duchess of Middlesex, the rule is quite different for the marquise. The Marquess and Marchioness of Montgomeryshire would always be referred to as Lord and Lady Montgomeryshire. There are a few formal occasions on which the full title would be used, but it would never occur in intimate speech.

"The shibboleth is so often transgressed by novelists and others who love the peerage better than they know its ways that it may seem a little hard to believe how wrong it appears to be among the people who really know."

Official Instructions

Then we asked the Department of Internal Affairs what it thought. The answer was that instructions from the official party were that the "the" should be used; it appeared on the official souvenir programme of their tour.

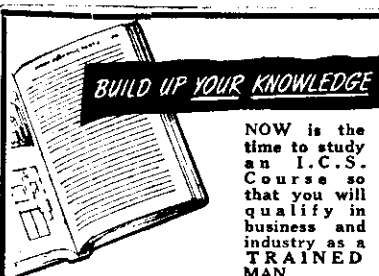
We hope that this definitely answers the correspondent. If there seems to be anything indefinite about it, then the fault lies not with the announcers, not with the Department of Internal Affairs, nor with us, nor with our distinguished visitors, but rather it is to be found in the maze of conventions and traditions which over the ages have come to surround the aristocracy.

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MANY thousands of sailors, soldiers, and airmen have seen and heard the 2YA Camp Entertainers at work. Far fewer civilians have seen them, because the party was formed primarily for the benefit of the Armed Forces. But it has been on the air on several occasions and its reputation as a variety company is a good one.

Though goloshes and umbrellas were part of the logical wear to the Wellington Town Hall the other night, when the party made a public appearance, there was an audience of 2000. The party's effort this time was to help the funds of the Wellington Hospital nurses' convalescent and beach cottage. The first part of the programme was broadcast.

This was a light, bright show, designed to amuse rather than instruct. It succeeded. For example, there was this programme note: "So-and-so will render operatic arias. (N.B. Rend means to tear apart.)" But that was by the way. An orchestra, vocal ensemble, a piano-acordionist, comedians, a crooner or so, a Russian novelty instrumentalist, a magician, sopranos, contraltos, basses and baritones produced a number of interesting items from the vaudeville hat. The audience was delighted and no doubt the nurses were happy when the box office takings were counted.



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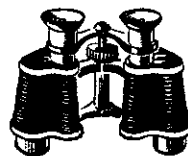
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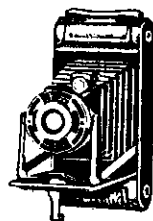
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