

MAY 17, 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.

Can Hopes Be Houses?

IT would be ridiculous to suggest that A.M.R.'s article on Page 12 solves the housing problem. It is not offered as a solution. But it would be more ridiculous still to think that nothing can be done by individual effort to ease the problem; that we have nothing to learn from other countries because they are other countries; and that no part of Stockholm's plan could be applied to New Zealand cities because it is not applicable as a whole. We print the article to give interested readers something definite to think about; a foundation of fact for their obstinate questionings. Every homeless New Zealander is wondering how to cease being homeless. It is not a question of approving or disapproving what has been done already, but of doing something additional as an individual to get a permanent roof over his own head. Thousands of similarly placed people in Stockholm have built homes with the municipal aids outlined in A.M.R.'s article. The question is: What adaptation of those aids, if any, would bring relief, even a moderate amount of relief, to our own doors? It is no use telling a man how to build a house if he can't get building material; or helping him with loans if he can't buy. The Stockholm scheme will not cut down trees or fill up cement bags. It will not take workmen into the wilderness to live as their grandfathers lived 75 years ago. But it could, or perhaps could, start a few hundred young New Zealanders building homes instead of shacks at week-ends, camping on building lots of their own instead of on the land of strangers, and even, it might be, acquiring some unconscious lessons in citizenship. A.M.R. makes no definite claims, and we make none. We suggest merely that he has injected some hope into a multitude of vague dreams.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THE "DARK AGES"

Sir,—In my reply to Mr. Miller's letter I wished merely to make a correction which I thought, and still think, was necessary. I had no intention of entering into a discussion as to whether St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the greatest philosophers or not. I have no standards by which to measure the greatness of one philosopher in comparison with another.

It appears that my use of the word "blackout" has raised a storm. I am willing to withdraw the word. I will substitute for it the suggestion that from about the year 1400 (pace Mr. Miller) the world began to progress far more rapidly than it had done in the previous centuries. Now, I suppose, I lay myself open to the question of what is progress. Who was the more advanced, Socrates walking barefooted in the *agora*, or the modern housewife using her electric washing-machine in her neat little house. I don't know.

I only maintain that the authorities in the Middle Ages—and they were the Church—did little or nothing to educate the common people towards the present age. They were a closed guild, keeping their mysteries to themselves, and their temporal power died when the other guilds died. If the direction of the people had continued to lie in their hands, we should still be living in the Middle Ages.

Mr. Foote twits me with the words of my namesake, William Tyndall. I can only reply that the words attributed to him by Foxe, when replying to a parish priest, appear to me to represent the truth—"If God spare my life, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost." Those words seem to me to breathe the spirit of the Renaissance—of the new world. In my previous letter I asked for painters before the year 1400. I was given two, Giotto and Cimabue. Not a great number in four centuries, when you compare the output of the Renaissance. In writing there was much the same state of affairs. In music, the same.

However, I do not wish to do more than make my point. I bow to the superior knowledge of Professor Wood, but I think he will allow that I have a little right on my side. On the other hand, I take the strongest exception to the letter of "Pas," of Hawera. In attacking the serial itself on historical grounds, he shows himself lamentably ignorant of the history of the period. I did not say that the Turks were not a menace to Eastern Europe. I merely quoted verbatim a letter actually written by Erasmus. These words written by Erasmus are exactly the words which "Pas" claims to be ridiculously untrue. Moreover, I said nothing about Grecian girls. I spoke of Grecian wine, of which Erasmus was very fond. He was also very fond of girls—thoroughly enjoyed being kissed. I suggest that, before "Pas" again enters upon a discussion of the character of Erasmus, and the history of his times,

he should make himself conversant with both. There are plenty of good books on the subject.

C. T. A. TYNDALL

(Wellington).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

DECENTRALISING ART.

Sir,—An event perhaps symptomatic of cultural trends in other places in New Zealand, occurred recently in Waimate, South Canterbury. When Masefield's *Good Friday* was read in the parish church there was a popular request for its repetition in the same Easter season. This is significant because on two occasions eight or ten years ago a similar attempt met with very little response. This time, however, it has prompted a desire for the continued study and production of religious drama.

It is significant, too, that the readers

More letters from listeners will be found on page 23

of *Good Friday* were business people and artisans. When the ordinary people of a town feel the truth of works of art and are themselves able to transmit that feeling to others, then they are artists and teachers and the place where they live may be called a cultural community, though, like Waimate, a small one. This has happened largely because of cultural decentralising influences like the National Broadcasting Service and the Repertory Movement.

But now the time has come to require of small towns that they shall make a larger and recognised contribution to our national consciousness—and we may find that they only await the opportunity to express their individuality. In these days when recordings can so easily be made, a healthy community rivalry in dramatic expression might conceivably be fostered without much difficulty by the National Broadcasting Service. It is by two-way communication, getting and giving, that art grows. BERNICE SHACKLETON (Waimate).

G.B.S. ON THE BIBLE

Sir,—Coincidence prompts this letter—the coincidence that I read the article in your issue about the Bible as a best seller just after I had read George Bernard Shaw's views on it as given in his *Everybody's Political What's What*, published in 1944. I commend Shaw's remarks to the Rev. J. W. Platt.

J. MALTON MURRAY

(Oamaru).

THE ST. MATTHEW PASSION

Sir,—May I publicly congratulate Stanley Oliver, the Schola Cantorum, the orchestra, and the NBS for its recording of the Saint Matthew Passion? The broadcasting of these recordings on Good Friday and the Thursday night preceding was in my opinion the highest achievement to date of the NBS in broadcasting a concert performance in New Zealand. If it is a matter for some regret that in only one place in New

Zealand, under one conductor with orchestra and choir unique in the country, such things are possible, it does at least show what can be done when the best available resources are placed under the command of somebody who knows his job. A. C. KEYS (Auckland).

STATION 2YD.

Sir,—L. D. Austin is making a vast mistake when he says that the 3YA programmes are repetition of 2YD. Certainly not the ones to which we made reference. These are broadcast from 3YA between 9.0 a.m. and 9.45, with the exception of Saturdays and the mornings on which the Correspondence School is on the air. In these 9.0 a.m. sessions we hear such composers as Handel, J. S. Bach, Cesar Franck, and Tchaikovsky, and artists such as Albert Schweitzer, E. Power Biggs, Edwin Fischer, and Webster Booth. L. D. Austin need only look up the 2YD programmes in *The Listener*. There he will see listed "Krazy Kapers," Hollywood Spotlight, "Accent on Rhythm," "A Young Man with a Swing Band," etc. Rather a difference anyone must admit; and these, together with Bing, the Andrews Sisters, Connie Boswell, and others of the kind, comprise the "rubbish" to which we made previous reference. HOMEY & CO.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Sir,—Your leading article on the above subject is timely. Personally, I do not think that the small minority of town people who misbehave themselves while in the country are actuated so much by selfishness as through sheer ignorance. Truly, the ignorance of some of these people is astonishing. I once read a news paragraph about a city motorist who, having met with some mishap on the road, and not wishing to bother a near-by farmer, took a length of wire from a fence to repair a minor damage to his car. In payment for this wire, worth perhaps less than a penny, he left 10/- on the gate post for the farmer. This, according to the paragraph, was a most gentlemanly way to act and one which would tend to remove any hostility there may exist between the town and country. It had not occurred to the motorist that these wires—yes, every one of them—were on the fence for purposes other than ornament, and that removing one of them, even though only a short length, may have caused damage far greater than his car was worth. This could have easily happened in the case of stud flocks.

We teach our children in the schools how to behave in traffic on the roads. Could not this idea be carried a bit further and give the kiddies some inkling of civic responsibilities generally. This goes for the town as well as the country. No doubt there are phases of city life which could with advantage be made known to the country children, thereby ensuring greater harmony among all sections of our community.

P.W. (Te Awamutu).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT.

W. Jaray (Nelson): Suggestions appreciated. In the meantime, however, tabulation inadvisable without stabilisation, which, for various reasons, cannot be guaranteed.