

JULY 19, 1946

Friendship with Russia

ON the general principle that ten words spoken in friendship may carry further than ten pages of recrimination and suspicion, we reprint a report from New York of a recent meeting between Russian and American editors. There is some repetition in the story, and most readers will find some gaps; but gaps sometimes mean more than filled spaces. They certainly mean something in this case, though care should be observed in filling them in. It would be criminal to assume that what the Russians said about the liberty of the press was not said honestly, or that they had their tongues in their cheeks when they said that "everyone (in Russia) can go and see what he wants to see." When the Russians wish to deceive they have better ways of doing it than that, and it is far more likely in this case that they were as sincere as a London or New York editor would be who assured them that he was independent of his advertisers. The most important fact was that the Russians attended at all; arrived as guests and stayed as friends. But the most significant thing after that was the obvious difficulty both sides had in accepting what was said at its face value. In their desire to say things that the Americans would understand the Russians fell back on emotionalism; though it was certainly not a hollow trick. But they just bewildered the Americans when they complained of the unfriendliness of the American press, of the reluctance of the Western powers to go on attacking Fascism, and on top of that maintained that America was fairly presented to the readers of newspapers in Leningrad and Moscow. Friendship is difficult to establish unless the same words used by different people mean the same thing; and it would therefore be foolish to exaggerate what was achieved at this conference. But nations are some distance on the way to friendship the moment they meet—and a little farther on the way when they awake to the fact that they can be in contact physically and worlds apart in thought and speech.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JULY 19

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

"AUDITIONS"

Sir,—It is at least surprising to read in an advertisement concerning the Symphony Orchestra the following sentence: "It will not be necessary in the meantime for applicants who have already been auditioned, to apply for re-audition." This advertisement is apparently made under the authority of the Director of Broadcasting, and the National Broadcasting Service is supposed to be an agency for promoting culture and enlightenment. Shall we soon be reading: "He that hath ears to audition, let him audition," or "This case is set down for re-auditioning on July 22?" What would A.P.H. say?

C.N.M. (Wanganui).

TOWN PLANNING

Sir,—In a recent edition of *The Listener* there appeared a "sketch of the central area of a planned town." The first thing about this sketch which would attract the notice of any thinking man or woman is that nowhere in it is there to be found any mention of a place of worship. In the days of the pioneers in New Zealand the Church was the centre of the community. In many parts of the country there are beautiful churches which were erected by simple country folk who were by no means rich, but who recognised their faith in God as the centre of their existence. Now it would seem that in the town of the future the Church is to have no part, or at any rate a part secondary to that of the cinema, golf links, etc. If that is the intention, then God help New Zealand.

ION FRANCIS (Christchurch).

Sir,—What is wrong with your town-planners? They have designed a whole town complete with shops, schools, factories, and railroads—and left out a community centre. Don't they read the women's magazines and the weekly journals? Don't they realise that a community centre is the heart, the soul, the life blood, the intellectual powerhouse (running at half capacity) of every modern community?

No modern architect, sir, plans a town. He merely sets down on the appropriate spot a community centre and the town naturally wraps itself around it growing like the pearl in the oyster and taking its light from within. And yet this upstart fellow plans a whole city without a community centre.

Tut, tut, sir! it won't work. Listen to the radio lecturers, the newspaper leader writers, the ten-year planners, the social studies teachers. Better still—come here.

HOMO (Dargaville).

HENVY V.

Sir,—I have read with interest an article in your paper on the film version of *Henry V.*, which we expect to be released shortly. I have a criticism to offer, but as one who has seen the film by the courtesy of the firm handling it, I should think it churlish to find fault were I not first able to commend it very strongly. I was most impressed and entertained by this outstanding film, which I am waiting eagerly to see again.

But one special spot I see in the sun of this brilliant success. Why has the producer seen fit to travesty the part of the two bishops? One is represented, beyond all question, as a simpleton and

a clown, and the other, while less stupid, suffers his fooling and plays up to it. Now even those who delight to scorn religious persons and institutions must, if well informed, admit that these parts are not in character; and others will find in them a painful lapse in taste.

Shakespeare's bishops in general, and these two in particular, are men who command respect, personally as well as through their office. It is inconceivable that a student of the play should have missed the atmosphere of the scene in which Henry appeals to the Archbishop for a solemn verdict upon his claim to France. The King himself makes clear that the lives of many of his subjects, perhaps his own, depend on the answer received; yet in the film that answer is given to the accompaniment of irresponsible fooling. Shakespeare knew how to amuse high and low, and did it, as liberally in this play as elsewhere; but it is not in the tradition either of scholarship or of good taste to spice one of his most impressive scenes—a Council of State—with buffoonery.

The producer has, in fact, run away from an awkward problem. How to present effectively the long speeches of the Chronicle Plays is now past our finding out. Fearing boredom so early in the play, unwilling for some reason to "cut," the producer decided to carry off the tedious speech — on which the lives, limbs, and happiness of thousands depended — with mild but most ill-conceived clowning. To do this, he had to make the characters of the bishops fit the part. Yet no word Shakespeare put into their mouths justifies this pitiful expedient.

—C.T. (Wellington)

"SONG OF THE EARTH"

Sir,—May I question the accuracy of the statement in "Things to Come" of June 28, that only superstition prevented Mahler from calling "The Song of the Earth" his *Tenth* Symphony? When this work was composed, he had written eight symphonies only; and Bruno Walter says:

"When he (Mahler) first talked to me of 'Das Lied von der Erde,' he spoke of it as a Symphony in Song: it was to have been his Ninth. Then he changed his mind; he thought of Beethoven and Bruckner, whose lives and works had ended with their Ninths, and he did not want to defy Fate."

Nevertheless Mahler later composed another symphony (officially titled the 9th), and left another unfinished at his death — his 11th, "The Song of the Earth" is counted as one.

SYMPHONY (Wadestown).

(Yes, Tenth should have been Ninth.—Ed.)

WEXFORD.

Sir,—In both of the very interesting and entertaining articles on Professor Allen, he is reported as saying that his mother was from Wexford in the West of Ireland. Whether it is worth while drawing attention to this inaccuracy I don't know; I shall leave it to your discretion; but Wexford is situated in the South-East corner of Ireland. It is more than a matter of geographical location because Wexford is altogether different in character from the West of Ireland. The latter is wild and barren and rugged, with grand scenery in Connemara, whereas Wexford is rich farming country. It follows that the people are different too.

R. S. JARDIN (Takapuna).

A NEW ZEALAND OBSERVER

Sir,—"Encourage local industry" seems to me, subject to safeguards, to be a warrantable, even a patriotic, slogan. For many reasons it is not generously applied to local literature. This may be why too little notice has been taken of J. E. Strachan's book *New Zealand Observer* published six years ago. To me as a teacher-reader it seems to have solid claims to the lasting esteem of fellow New Zealanders. It is rather a unique thing, a good travel book recounting with keen insight things not only seen, but thoughtfully considered. Time and again, the writer (never ostentatiously) "provides the answers." Its style is quiet, easy, and clear, but it is that of a man who feels it part of his integrity to say what he really thinks. His interest is human and it is as they react on fellow human beings that the writer evaluates American institutions with an eye which, if courteous, is also searching.

Mr. Strachan, as New Zealanders generally are beginning slowly to learn, is a very wise man. In his profession he has concerned himself with those things which help or hinder life as it must be lived. That is why his comments on varied aspects of American education are, though so unpretentiously phrased, so pregnant.

Surely all these qualities of writing and of thought make his book one of enduring value. It is because I take this view that I venture, very belatedly I admit, to call attention to it.

A FELLOW TEACHER

(Island Bay).

PRONUNCIATION BY NBS

Sir,—H. M. Bracken says that "accent" is invariably mispronounced "ack-sent." In passing, does it not appear that, if the word is *invariably* mispronounced, we are all out of step but our Jack? But are we? The only two dictionaries I have at home at the moment are Ogilvie and Annandale's (which has served me as a working dictionary for fifty years) and Webster's International. Both give the pronunciation of the word referred to as "ak-sent." Mr. Bracken did not give the correct pronunciation, but to my untutored ear "ack" and "ak" seem to be undistinguishable in sound.

A. H. REED

(Dunedin).

Sir,—May I also endorse your correspondent's comments on the pronunciation we are daily hearing on the air. Starting with the school session which is presumably run by specially educated people. A perfectly charming voice greets you, "Good-morning, everybuddy." Then later, an elderly man's voice says, "Good-morning byes and gurls." This is followed later by a lady who has no I's in her vocabulary. Things are nice and quate, etc. None of this can have a good effect on listening and learning children. Then on a recent Saturday during a special broadcast of the weather report a voice spoke of Teranaki, and Mawlborough. Are these speakers trying to improve our language or are they just trying to overcome their own inferiority complex?

H. ALEXANDER

(Auckland).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT

A. H. Cole (Wanganui): Not possible at present, but your opinion valued.