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War Story

THE Prime Minister reminded us the other day that the time for talking is when we have taken off our harness, not when we are girding it on. But that of course means that when the time to talk comes the struggle is no longer actively in our minds. We have not forgotten it; we shall never forget it; but we are not as receptive to the record of it in print as we might have been before it ended. But that stage passes too. The day comes when we want to look back, and feel betrayed if the sign-posts are not there. We want the facts, the figures, the dates, the events overseas, the over-all picture at home, and it was for that day, primarily, that *War Record*, an illustrated booklet of 62 pages, went last week into every New Zealand home. There is not much in it that we do not know now or could not, with a little difficulty, discover—though there are tables and comparisons that will surprise some of us when we begin to think what they mean. But to far more than half of us the facts in a year or two will be blurred and indistinct if we cannot at intervals pass them under review. They will still be in newspaper files and libraries and sooner or later will go on record in the war histories. In other words they will never be lost to students. But not many of us are students. Not many of us keep newspaper clippings, buy histories, or regularly use libraries. We are too busy, too tired, too ignorant, too untrained, too impatient, or too poor. We live in events as they happen, and when we blunder on events that depend on other events, on to-morrows that mean nothing without yesterdays, we fumble and lose our way. *War Record* is a defence against that. It is not the full story of the last six years, or half of it, or even a complete summary of it. But it is a better summary than 99 per cent. of us could or would have made for ourselves, and now we all possess it.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

CIVIC ART

Sir,—May I venture to suggest that by encouraging the use of *The Listener* as a forum for the discussion of questions of Communal or Civic Art you would add greatly to its interest and value. I know of no other journal in New Zealand so suitable for this purpose. You have already made a notable beginning with the publication of the article "New Towns for Old" by A.M.R., and more recently, the interview with Charles Cameron on Town and Country Planning in England. Keep up the good work.

May I also, as a corollary, suggest to those of your readers who expend so much time and thought in polemics over the merits or demerits of this or that school of painting, that they should exercise their critical faculties on something of greater community value—the design of buildings, for instance, or the embellishment of our streets and parks. A well-designed building, a fine group of statuary or a living pohutukawa tree is of greater significance in the life of the community than the finest painting hanging on the walls of an art gallery. After all, it requires a conscious effort to see a picture, unless one happens to live with it, but badly designed and dilapidated buildings and incongruous advertisements thrust themselves forcibly on our attention whether we like it or not.

The facile reply to this is that it is the business of our civic authorities to prevent abuses of this kind. It is true that these authorities, in addition to the standards they can themselves set in the design of civic buildings and other amenities, are armed with the power to control the external appearance of privately owned buildings and to protect objects or places of natural beauty. Local body policy, however, is largely dictated by public opinion. If that opinion is non-existent or fails to manifest itself, a local body would naturally be loth to assume the role of arbiter of public taste and refuse a building permit on aesthetic grounds. I could count on the fingers of one hand the instances in which public opinion has manifested itself through the Press in the last 15 years, on some important question of civic art; and the only case I can recall of the design of a building being publicly criticised is that of the proposed Anglican Cathedral in Wellington. In that time hundreds of buildings have been erected throughout New Zealand which in my opinion are little short of an outrage on public decency.

In the final analysis, I suppose, the formulation of a sound public opinion on any question of aesthetics is a matter of education. I find it difficult to believe, however, that anyone who had enjoyed the privilege of an education in New Zealand can plead ignorance of the principles of civic art, namely order, integrity, unity, harmony, and fitness for purpose. It has been said, indeed, that the human mind instinctively searches for and appreciates these qualities. Can it be, as a distinguished visitor to our shores once said, that judged by the man-made environment in which we live, we are a barbarous people? The cult of the primitive which appears to have such a substantial following in New Zealand would seem to lend colour to the suggestion.

J. W. MAWSON (Wellington).

THE CHURCH IN TOWN PLANS

Sir,—I must reply to your correspondent's criticisms of my article on Town-planning if only because their comments enable me to squeeze past your closure upon the "Cathedral v. Houses" controversy and get a post-ultimate last word in it. Like "Homo," I am all agin Community Centres in so far as they are ersatz—or, as I imagine Mr. Francis might put it, attempts of a secularised community to provide a substitute for "the House of God" which it has lost as the centre of its life. If communities want co-operatively-owned halls and gyms and committee-rooms (to be at the disposal of all local clubs), and if they can find a man or woman capable of making the whole show something more alive and more educative than just that, then good luck to their "community centre." If a community wants a central building to express in its architecture and in the activities that go on in it their gratitude to God and their desire to serve Him in his creation, then they, too, are doing a good thing. But elsewhere than such districts congregations and night classes and clubs will continue to function right in the residential areas where the people live.

That is why—our picture-planned city being one for ordinary contemporary people—the churches and halls were small and dispersed among the houses.

On the larger issue as to whether there should be any of these "non-essentials" there at all, I agree with your correspondent who, replying to a claim that funds for a certain proposed cathedral should be diverted to war relief, pointed out that it is the people who provide the former who are the main support of the latter; and who added that the community's fund of goodwill to support any immediate humanly worthwhile enterprise comes almost wholly out of its forebears' long-run investments in the worship of God. Toynbee's monumental history of human civilisations attests the obverse of this fact in the quotation he has placed on the title-page of each of the six volumes so far published—"Except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain."

I hope I have now made clear where I believe the Church fits into the community, whether planned or unplanned.
A.M.R. (Wellington).

CONCERT COMMENTARY

Sir,—Last Tuesday night I listened to a Lili Kraus broadcast from Dunedin. Reception was not particularly good and unfortunately what music did come through was marred by announcements and a commentary of monumental fatuity. I trust in future broadcasts are not similarly disfigured.

E. FROST (Hamilton)

SERVING FOR A PITTANCE

Sir,—Your reporter, in his condensed interview write-up of July 12, fathered a statement on me which I did not make. If "serving the Mission for a pittance" means that Dr. Eaton, by his own choice of work, was receiving only a fraction of the income that his training and ability could have brought him in New Zealand or Britain, it is course correct. Men of his mould don't let out their talents "for pay." But if the phrase implies, as some readers have

interpreted it, that the New Zealand Presbyterian Church pays its staff less than is required to perform their work efficiently and with fairness to their own needs, then it is false. I would appreciate the opportunity to clear myself on this point and would thank you for publishing this correction.

E. G. JANSEN (Nelson)

"VOX ANONYMA"

Sir,—Under the above heading your commentators praise the performances of Myra Thomson and H. G. Glaysher. Many listeners will agree with those remarks. We have heard these artists for (I think) about two and a-half years, giving us gems from the folklore and music of many nations. Two other artists were mentioned in the same paragraph as giving similar performances from 3YA, but though I am a regular listener, I cannot remember having heard either of these men in this type of presentation. To say that "it is good news that Mrs. Thomson will continue to swell their ranks" is hardly fair to a lady who has given us, over such a long period, a really unique type of performance.

T.M.H. (Christchurch).

VIBRATO

Sir,—Your correspondent "Enquirer" may be interested to know that "vibrato" as applied to pianoforte technique was first named by Breithaupt, a contemporary of Matthay. Thomas Fielden, the celebrated professor at the Royal College of Music, defines it thus:

"A state of fixation (or tension), of whole groups of muscles, which contains in itself, and controls, a corresponding group of actions, and is initiated by one embracing impulse of nerve power. The ultimate result of continued practice of this is a lessened strain in the tension, the physical actions becoming reflex, controlled as before by the inceptive nervous impulse; and these nervous impulses can be trained to control groups of such reflex actions."

C. STUART PANTING (Palmerston North).

BELL-RINGING

Sir,—I write to congratulate you on your excellent article on bell-ringing. May I add a little extra information on ringing in New Zealand.

There are several bands practising handbell ringing in the country. At Christchurch Cathedral we have a good band who ring the fine ring of ten bells (tenor 32cwt.) every Tuesday and Sunday, followed by a handbell practice of method ringing. Dunedin has a band of four ringers, who have rung a peal of 5000 changes on handbells, the only complete handbell peal rung in New Zealand. Then New Plymouth has a band of schoolchildren learning ringing. In Wanganui another old English ringer has a band practising, I believe, so that it is not nearly such a lost art as Mr. Ambrose imagines. St. Paul's, Papanui, Christchurch, has a dear little ring of five bells (tenor 6½cwt.) where ringing is practised, the inscription on the Tenor Bell being the appropriate "We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land."

GEORGE H. CLAYDON, late Ringing Master (Christchurch).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

Keith Pettit (French Bay): We regret inaccuracies as much as you do, but cannot announce changes made after we go to press. These can, however be announced over the air, and usually are—sometimes more than once.
Booklover (Marlborough): An original radio script, not based on a book.