

SEPTEMBER 20, 1946

## Friendship With Russia

IF we print to-day another long article about Russia, it is not to provoke the friends of Russia or question the sincerity of those who believe that Russia has a democratic Government. Our purpose is to emphasise what happens when 150 million people are deliberately isolated by their rulers from free contact with their neighbours. It may not seem very remarkable a hundred years hence that Russia in 1946 firmly rejected friendship with Britain and America, mistrusted them, and about once a week openly attacked them. A very few years have passed since friendship actually was impossible, on both sides, and it is not as if a new generation had grown up and assumed power in the meantime. Nothing like that has happened, and it would be unreal to expect that the old conflicts, animosities, and suspicions could vanish and leave no trace. But if it is not unnatural that there should be friction, it is extremely painful, and also extremely dangerous, that Russia should not even wish to be friendly with her two most powerful allies. It may be possible to maintain relations with a neighbour that are neither friendly nor hostile; the *New York Times* correspondent insists, after ten months in Moscow, that nothing else is possible with Russia; but it is not an easy line to keep, and there is nothing to indicate that it will become easier within the next few years. The quite astonishing reaction of the Moscow press to the American correspondent's report indicates, on the contrary, that the only present way to please the Russians is to praise them, that it is offensive to criticise them, and unfriendly even to look at them with both eyes. The democratic answer to that is something which would sound more offensive still, and it will not be made. It is more profitable to look for the hole in the wall that the *New Yorker* wants to find — a breach through which ordinary people on one side can communicate with ordinary people on the other side without Government control.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### BACON AND COKE

Sir,—R. L. Stevenson has insisted that a good reader must start with the admission that he is not always right, and this can apply to a listener also. I have listened with pleasure to the weekly broadcasts *Great Figures of the Bar*, but I was rather surprised to notice that the speaker when dealing with the great lawyer Sir Edward Coke, referred to him as a kindly and virtuous man, while at the same time referring to Coke's great contemporary and rival, Sir Francis Bacon, as a corrupt judge, servile and mean of soul. More recent light, however, has been thrown on the lives of these two men, showing Coke, although a great lawyer, to have been coarse, narrow-minded and venomous and utterly unscrupulous, whereas Bacon is shown as Coke's antithesis. The old view, which the most of us were taught in school, was founded on Macaulay's famous essay on Bacon, but Macaulay's view has been proved quite wrong. In fact, in *Bachelor's Life of Bacon* mention is made that Macaulay admitted he had made a mistake and expressed regret he had ever written his Bacon essay. His best biographer, J. Cotter Morrison, wrote "nothing has been more injurious to Macaulay's fame than this essay. . . . He deviated into fiction in his libel on Bacon." Hallam, the historian, described Bacon as "the greatest and wisest of mankind." A book recently published, *The Martyrdom of Bacon*, by Alfred Dodd, proves conclusively that Bacon was a greatly-wronged and misjudged man and was not guilty of corruption, whereas Coke was proved guilty of corruption, dismissed from all his high offices, and disgraced. Bacon, on the other hand, though after his fall not restored to his high office, was restored to the King's favour and in fact enjoyed a State pension so long as he lived of over £1,000 a year, equivalent to about £4,000 to £5,000 in our times.

"BACONIAN" (Johnstonville).

### LITERATURE AND LIQUOR.

Sir,—It is not in a spirit of criticism, but to make a point of some social importance, that I offer comment on a passage in "G.M.'s" notice of the film *The Lost Weekend*. "G.M." says the reason given for the hero being a dipsomaniac is not sufficient. "The feeling of hopelessness at the sight of an empty white page waiting to be filled is common enough . . . but fortunately it does not by itself send authors and journalists . . . off on a five-day binge." I haven't seen the film or read the book, but it is unfortunately a fact that there have been writers who have depended upon liquor as a weapon against the menace of "The empty white page," and have come to grief in consequence. Many years ago Coulson Kernahan, an English writer of standing, wrote a short story on the subject. A young writer took a stimulant to help him over a hard job, contracted the habit, and became a hopeless drunkard. There is more over-drinking in the literary world of England than the public realises, and it is reasonable to suppose that some of these cases proceed from this cause. The practice of the arts often imposes a heavy nervous strain. Writers, including journalists, have to work against time, and perhaps miss regular meals. The temptation to seek the aid of liquor is sometimes strong, and is apt to lead to disaster. In advice

to young writers, Hilaire Belloc has something to say about this. But, as the history of letters shows, one can become a slave to other things besides drink. Edgar Wallace kept going on frequent cups of sweetened tea, and died, after a short illness, of diabetes.

A.M. (Wellington).

### THE ENCORE HABIT.

Sir,—After recent concerts in Auckland by visiting pianists of renown the habit of demanding encores seemed to show up more than usual as the foreign growth it is. On our little islands do we not know what work up to capacity is, and are we not descendants of still harder working pioneers? Do we allow our employers by smiling pressure to extract an extra period of work from us for nothing? Or do we ask for more on the basis of an inadequate performance, and therefore enforce the encores as a compensation due? I believe that the majority of our lovers of serious music would salute that city which first offers servants of music "The Freedom" from the encore habit. It takes the joy we intend to return away from the end applause. Our pure milk is soured. Why not let our applause become an art too, and be there for its own sake?

The whole question is one in which we will have to take the initiative ourselves. The artist cannot be expected to do so, as the higher his differentiation the more delicately balanced becomes his collective relationship. We must realise that he finds himself under the sternest of laws, viz., to return the last farthing to the common pool, and he can therefore during a performance only be concerned with giving his all, even to the bitter end of the encores. So please, let us be sports and from our own accord give release from the thoughtless practice under reference.

There are things that we cannot as yet everywhere offer, such as soundproof halls, elegant stages, and first-class instruments, and in Auckland anyway we listeners have to sit on hard kitchen chairs during a performance in our Town Hall, but we can offer courtesy indicated by simple human feeling.

—"PLEASE" (Auckland).

### BEFORE THE CHIMES

Sir,—I wish to suggest that at 9.0 p.m. at the period immediately prior to the chimes, sufficient time be allowed to complete the recording of the meditative music usually played at this time. I feel this would be more appreciated by listeners, and should the record finish a little before 9.0, well, let us have that few seconds' meditative silence.

H. COX (Ashburton).

### OUR SHORT STORIES

Sir,—I have recently been going through some back numbers of *The Listener* cutting out the most interesting articles (there are a lot of them) before consigning the remainder to menial household duties, and at the same time I have been having a look at your stories of the last few months. What strikes one most forcibly is the extreme introspection of most of them; the long screeds of highly private musing, soul-searching, and applied psychology. Most of them are well written, and there can be no objection to such themes in moderation—they are as legitimate as any others. But when you have the whole bang lot

of them, with some exceptions, contemplating their navels with such attention it makes you wonder if they wouldn't be better for a little fresh air.

DENNIS McELDOWNNEY  
(Christchurch).

### SHAKESPEARE ON THE AIR

Sir,—I wish to express my appreciation of the number of scenes from Shakespeare that have been broadcast lately. It is not often we have the opportunity of seeing the plays acted (although Christchurch has had its fair share this year) and these extracts are very welcome. Congratulations to the NZBS for putting them on, and I hope we hear more of them in the future.

HENRY V (Christchurch).

### HENRY V

Sir,—It is difficult to understand Professor Sinclair's criticism of this notable English film production, as one would imagine that almost any university professor would have heartily welcomed a good British picture after their general condemnation of American pictures. To hear the English language spoken correctly should alone be sufficient reason. It is interesting therefore to read in the latest issue of the *Motion Picture Herald* (a trade publication from U.S.A.) what the well-known American critics, who are usually so severe on English films, say about *Henry V*. The *Herald Tribune* (New York) sees only perfection in it ("England has sent a superlative picture to these shores.") The *New York Times* calls it "stunningly brilliant"; the *Daily News* gives it its top grading—four stars. These people rarely, indeed, have a good word for anything but their own American product. It is also interesting to read how well the film is being received by large and enthusiastic audiences throughout the States. At a recent preview in Auckland I personally heard it spoken of as the finest British film we have ever seen here. This time it looks as if the professor must be wrong, since few, if any, agree with him.

PHIL HAYWARD (Auckland).

### SOLOMON CONCERT

Sir,—I read with interest the letter of J. Williams re Solomon and the "Emperor" Concerto. Perhaps Mr. Williams has not realised that the gentlemen who were broadcast from 2YA on the night in question can only be heard at rare intervals: to wit, a mere twice a day on four days a week for some 30 weeks in the year. On the other hand, Solomon can be heard at almost any time—at least four times in a lifetime. This was perhaps the reason why Solomon's broadcast was transferred to a station which however badly received in Hawke's Bay could hardly be received at all in Auckland.

Perchance they feared that all the Parliamentary reporters would be taken suddenly ill and the Budget Debate would not be printed in the next day's newspapers.

The footnote referred to appeared to me the equivalent of throwing a brick at a drowning man.

D. McROBIE (Auckland).

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. Ainsworth Norton (Christchurch): The recording you mention is an American one which, we understand, has never been procurable in New Zealand.

N. L. Chisholm (Dargaville): Contrary to you, and after a "careful perusal" as recommended, we think your statement is exaggerated.

"Dissatisfied" (Auckland): See Answer to Correspondent on Page 31, issue of September 6.