

OCTOBER 18, 1946

Security and the Price

IT is not at all unnatural that Sydney Greenbie, who failed in his mission to sell America to New Zealand, should now be defending himself to America. Nor is it unfair that we, who sometimes laughed at him, should be laughed at by him in the columns of the *Saturday Evening Post*. It is good for us to be laughed at, and some of the things that Mr. Greenbie says about us are true. It is the truth that there are not many of us, and that we are still nearer to Britain than to America. It is true also that we have obtained social security at a price, as America maintains rugged individualism at a price. What Mr. Greenbie fails to see is that we would sooner pay our price than pay his. The price we pay for security is reduction in the opportunities for adventure. Life is clearly more exciting when you don't know that the roof above your head to-day will still be above it to-morrow; that the spoon in your porridge will have an uninterrupted passage to your mouth; that the wife who makes your bed may not have to make someone else's bed next week or go without bread for her children; and that you must somehow or other avoid getting sick in case you can't pay for the doctor. It would be more exciting not to wash your hands — you would never know from hour to hour what new bug you had swallowed; or not to wear clothes — you might get pneumonia and you might get jail; or not to cut your hair — you might be taken for a prophet and you might attract the birds. Every civilised thing we do takes the zest out of life, as Mr. Greenbie will discover if he makes a few simple experiments — eats with his mouth open, scratches himself as often as he is itchy, or even uses the language about us that comes first to his mind when he remembers how little we listened to him. Every time he restrains himself in those ways, and in hundreds of others, he avoids social conflicts at the price of primitive delights. The question is whose price we are going to pay — the barbarian's, who offers the excitement of driving along a road without rules or road signs, or the civilised man's, who robs us of the fun of collisions and the adventure of sudden death but gives us a 90 per cent. chance of getting home.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WATER DIVINING

Sir,—I was rather surprised at the appearance in your columns of such an ill-informed article on the above subject. Dowsing is a well-established fact. Even the conservative British Army has a section devoted to it, which did good work in North Africa during this last war. It has also been largely used by Roman Catholic priests in France (*vide*, books by Henry Le Vicomte de France, Besterman, Maby, etc.).

A friend in Hawke's Bay complained of rheumatism, etc. I suggested it might be water under the house, and advised her to put a sheet of lead under her mattress, to cut off the vibrations. A few months later she wrote thanking me for the help. She had quite recovered and there was a stream under the house. This is now being shifted to a drier position.

G.L.S. (Christchurch).

A SENSE OF THE LUDICROUS

Sir,—Permit me respectfully to congratulate you on the discovery of the artist who signs as "Alain" the race-course picture on page 22 of your issue of September 6. Apart from adequate draughtsmanship, he displays a sense of the ludicrous that I think New Zealand artists rarely show. Good funny pictures raise a smile; the best elicit a spontaneous audible chuckle. This is in the latter class. I hope he will sell you many more such pictures.

READER

(Te-Ike-a-Maui).

(Unfortunately perhaps for us, he is an American artist, but whatever he draws for *The New Yorker* we are able to pass on to our readers.—Ed.)

HENRY V

Sir,—Why all the hostility towards Professor Sinclair's criticism of the *Henry V* film? Most of the correspondents seem to have missed the point, namely, that Shakespeare being essentially a humanist, his plays require the interpretation of living human actors on the stage and not the mechanised puppets of the film.

After reading the glowing accounts advertised in connection with *Henry V*, I went to see it with the expectation of enjoying a superlative entertainment, but was so disappointed and bored that I walked out before its conclusion.

The whole performance seemed to me to be artificial, and completely lacking the atmosphere of Shakespeare.

On reaching home I opened my Shakespeare and read the play through again, finding much pleasurable enjoyment in it, and time to reflect on the sequence of events, some of which had been deleted from the film version.

Some years ago I saw another Shakespearean play filmed, and felt the same disappointment as with *Henry V*, yet the same thing played by a first-class theatrical company was magnificent. Several people to whom I have spoken have said they were disappointed with *Henry V* and did not understand why it had been advertised to such an extent, but no doubt the film seemed adequate to minds that have become mechanised in this machine age.

E.M.L. (Christchurch).

Sir,—Seeing *Henry V* was like viewing a magnificent spectacle—but I came away wondering how many of those who have attacked Professor Sinclair's criticism of the film production were defending Shakespeare's small contribution to

the show and how many were defending the feast of glorious technicolour. No doubt they applauded the film with the best of intentions and it is easy to understand that many who previously profession boredom with Shakespeare were agreeably surprised to find that he too could be dished up in appetising form, complete with all the condiments, judiciously cut by the enterprising producer, and in fact presented in such a way that they could spend their usual Saturday evening at the pictures without any undue strain on their intellect or imagination.

But the question is whether this photographic wizardry served to reveal or conceal Shakespeare. To most true lovers of Shakespeare all this gadgetting did not ring true and, as Professor Sinclair says, the film is ten parts gadgetting to one part Shakespeare. The great virtue of the historical plays is Shakespeare's amazing capacity to describe sufficiently in words: "how the swift scene flies" to "conjure up within this

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wooden cockpit the vasty fields of France." Performed with great simplicity on the stage (for which it was written) *Henry V* is far more dramatic and splendid than is this most costly film production.

I venture to suggest that Olivier has seen that it will profit him greatly to make films whereas to remain as a great Shakespearean stage actor would profit him but little. Who can blame him for wishing to make his fortune? He has obviously seen that to make his film a box-office draw, he must lather it with a good amount of the "gadgetting" which the film-going public both expects and demands. It is more than probable that Will Shakespeare himself, born into the Atomic Age, would have risen from bell-hop to film magnate and found in Hollywood the best market for his ingenuity and imagination. But Shakespeare, with unerring taste and judgment, would not have tried to mix technicolour and Elizabethan drama.

May I draw attention to two particular points in the film where I thought the producer erred:

(a) In introducing a rather loud angelic choir which sang appropriate Walton music while we made our parachute jump into the Globe Theatre.

(b) In cutting the glove incident Act IV., Scenes 7 and 8—a dramatic sequel to the events of the night before.

C. M. WATTS (Wellington).

Sir,—*Henry V*? A magnificent production of a comparatively *dud* play. When the poet was not (like his incomparable Falstaff) "babbling of green fields" the scene of action simply drifted backwards and forwards over the somewhat tedious (though lavish) spectacle of a mediaeval war of aggression. Sometimes, of course, the sheer energy of thought and phrase broke through this trivial round of events to "ascend the brightest heaven of invention" but on the whole it is to

JOAN HAMMOND CONCERTS

JOAN HAMMOND, the Australian soprano, who was to have arrived in time to give her first concert in Christchurch on Tuesday, October 15, has had to postpone her visit because of laryngitis. Her first appearance will now be made in Wellington this Saturday, October 19. This concert, and the second Wellington one (Tuesday, October 22), and the two Auckland concerts (October 29 and October 31) will remain as announced; but the concerts scheduled for Dunedin and Christchurch this week (Tuesday and Thursday, October 15 and 17), have been cancelled. A concert in Christchurch has been arranged for Friday, October 25, and the NZBS is hoping to arrange also for a concert in Dunedin, but as we go to press it is not yet possible to say when this will be.

be regretted that Laurence Olivier expended so much time, thought, and imagination upon one of Shakespeare's comparatively inferior plays.

J.O.M. (Karori).

(This correspondence is now closed, though Professor Sinclair, who opened up the subject, may if he wishes, exercise his right of reply.—Ed.)

BAND MUSIC.

Sir,—I have been a listener to band programmes from the start of New Zealand broadcasting and on a recent Friday from 2YA I was privileged to hear what I thought was the finest ever broadcast from a local studio. The Wellington Citadel Salvation Army Band has been consistently good over a period of years but on that Friday night they attained a new high level. As a grateful listener I would like to thank the Band for their efforts and feel proud that Wellington has a combination which must rank with the world's best.

"BRASS" (Lower Hutt).

HAWAIIAN SONGS.

Sir,—I have something to growl about, and I am sure several of our listeners will agree with me. Why play so many Hawaiian songs when there are our own Maori songs and hakas that are even better than many of the Hawaiian "Hula-hula Girls," etc.?

"FOURTEEN YEAR OLD" (Hastings).

HAROLD NICHOLSON.

Sir,—It would be interesting to know the number of New Zealand listeners who have understood a single word spoken by Harold Nicholson in his recent "Peace" Conference talks. What a pity it is that we haven't television. He is quite an impressive looking person—in a large, florid way.

T. T. BOND (North Auckland).

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

Sir,—I read with pleasure and interest an article in a recent *Listener* on New Zealand films, their development and progress, which is very creditable—but if they would only change that awful tune which goes with them! It is a tune we have listened to incessantly all the weary years of the war. Surely we could have a new one now!

PROGRESS (Hastings).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Lincoln Lee (Auckland) and Arthur Smart (Christchurch): Both interesting letters, but unfortunately not directly related to any subject in our columns.