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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.

Christmas

IT is a proof of the enduring hopefulness of our race that we hesitate to be cynical about Christmas. Governments fall and systems crash, friends fight and allies denounce one another, but we sit down together at Christmas for the same draught of hope and good cheer. Another way of putting it of course is that it is a proof of the enduring power of Christianity. We might put it that way ourselves if this were the occasion and the place. But whatever words are used they mean that hope springs eternal in most of us. It would not be so if we were decadent and effete; if the sap had left the tree and there remained only dead wood; if misery had beaten us to the ground and we had no strength to rise again. We are young, as growth goes. We cling to the upturned boat never doubting that we shall reach the shore—the beautiful shore that we still find so satisfying. We are children. And because we are children, little children weak who can forgive and forget and believe and wonder and burn our fingers and cry and do it all over again, Christmas still has a meaning for us, and a message, and an undying hope. It lets us know that we have another chance; that sins can be forgiven; that the fallen can rise again; that blunders can be forgotten; that weakness can become strength, clouds lift, and tears turn to smiles, not in some distant paradise, but in our own broken, disordered lives when the light of Christianity penetrates them. So we cling to Christmas whether we have conscious faith or none. We know, if we are capable of thought at all, that it is better to melt than to freeze, that kindness is stronger than unkindness, charity more satisfying than suspicion and hate. We know these things always; but we see them better and feel them more strongly when the emotions of two thousand years make us for a little one family.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

AUNT DAISY'S TALKS

Sir,—In reply to "Little Sir Echo" I think he should count his blessings to be able to listen to Aunt Daisy's travel talks. To me they are very refreshing—when I can listen in to them, though very often a wood-saw is going full blast, and one can't hear for the din. I consider Aunt Daisy one of the finest ambassadors this country ever had; and having travelled myself quite a bit can visualise all that she says. We do get the King's English without any frills, and I am only sorry her talks are so short! I would much prefer to listen to her than to some of the make-believe highbrow stuff that gets dished up now and again from the YA stations.

WIFE OF A COALMAN (Johnsonville).

"NICE OF YOU, BUT..."

Sir,—The brief review of my book *If You'd Care to Know*, which appeared in your issue of November 29 over the name of David Hall, can hardly be regarded as a fair summing-up of my work. Of this book about New Zealand Mr. Hall makes the sweeping statement that it is not enlightening, or as he has expressed it, "Enlightening it is not."

It is surprising to learn that in the 169 pages of my writing Mr. Hall has found no fact concerning our Dominion with which he was not already familiar. Before reading my book, was Mr. Hall really aware of the remarkable method used by the Maoris to procure their tattoo ink, as described by me? Did he know all that I have written about our imported wild animals, and how and when we introduced the wapiti, moose, and chamois? Could he have stated, say in a Radio Quiz, the numbers of farm animals that were in New Zealand at a given date? Was it not news to Mr. Hall that there were originally 63 volcanic cones on the Auckland Isthmus, and was he able to write down without previous notice, the quantities of foods at the Maori feast in 1836?

The foregoing are but a few of the many items of interest that I have touched upon, and for Mr. Hall to dismiss such a book as lacking in enlightenment implies that he is a man with an immense and unique knowledge of this country, and I might suggest that in him you have the complete one-man New Zealand Brains Trust. The fact is that my book does contain much that is enlightening to the average reader, if not to Mr. Hall.

Mr. Hall makes no reference to anything good in my writing, but devotes his brief space to a completely destructive review. There is a display of annoyance when he says, "the lengths to which the author goes to salute the rising sun of the United States set the teeth on edge." Mr. Hall would have spared himself that distressing dental affliction had he bothered to read the Preface to my book, wherein I explain that my writing is directed, in the main, to readers in other countries, chiefly America.

Perhaps it would take the edge off Mr. Hall's teeth if he could steel himself to read my words, "It is a trait of the American people—that they are rather overseen in their own set-up and do not know much about other and smaller countries where life is just as good." Apparently he brushed aside my statement, "America is a great failure," and the reasons that I have given for such an opinion. There should also be

some consolation for Mr. Hall in the fact that elsewhere in my writing I have devoted the greater part of a chapter to a criticism of influential Americans, including Colonel McCormick, because of their wordy and pernicious anti-British bombardments. Does Mr. Hall regard all that as a "salute" to America?

In conclusion, Mr. Hall thinks my literary style is "a sort of historian's Tommy Handley's half-hour." Should he actually read the book he will discover that it is not all history—in fact, on the loose cover of the volume are the words, "—it is not a history." I am

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 16 and 17

not an historian. For his next review, I would recommend to Mr. Hall the New Zealand Year Book. Its conventional literary style would perhaps be more pleasing to him, but of course there is the possibility that he would be compelled to say even of that excellent publication, "Enlightening it is not."

PAUL H. SIMPSON (Auckland).

PLAY REVIVALS WANTED

Sir,—Confined to the house on a wet Sunday recently I heard a session of the BBC feature *Travellers' Tales* in its entirety, where previously I have heard only tantalising morsels. Because of their high dramatic standard and general appeal, could we not have them broadcast in the evenings?

During the last ten years we have heard some outstanding plays both by NZBS and the BBC. Some of the older ones would be completely new to many listeners, and old friends to others. One in particular I shall never forget—the BBC's dramatization of Wymper's assault on the Matterhorn.

E.P.D. (Palmerston North).

CHARACTER IN A SERIAL

Sir,—I have been listening to the broadcast of *Early Days in New Zealand* from 3ZB. I feel in duty bound to protest that the character of Sgt. Seager in the McKenzie serial hardly depicts the character of the man concerned. I have listened intently and find that Sgt. Seager is portrayed as a bluff individual exhibiting none of the characteristics of his true nature. He was originally a schoolteacher and came to this country in the early days of the Canterbury settlement; in fact was one of the pioneers. A more even-tempered and kindly man it would be hard to find. His language showed none of the slang attributed to him in this serial. Nor was he boastful in his manner or words. I feel, Sir, that in portraying a character, it is the duty of the author to keep to facts, both as to history and character. Many are the stories I have listened to from my grandfather about this same Sgt. Seager who was known for his kindness and thoughtful actions.

Perhaps one anecdote about McKenzie may interest and amuse. The musical society (now the Royal Orchestral Society) of which my grandfather was a foundation member, was holding a meeting in Lyttelton, when in rushed a constable saying the gaol was going down the street. Out rushed Sgt. Seager to find that McKenzie and some sailors who

were locked in, had lifted the gaol from its foundations and were carrying it down the hill. When stopped, they were quite content to go back to the foundations and the musical evening was concluded.

Some years ago Mr. Seager published his reminiscences in a local paper, copies of which I now hold. They make interesting reading. Mr. Seager died, at the age of 97, some years ago.

E. H. S. BATCHELOR (Christchurch).

CONTROVERSY ON THE AIR

Sir,—Your editorial of November 1 seems a little unfair to listeners who enjoy broadcasts of the Brains Trust type. You say that controversy on the air really means "Speakers contradicting one another and quarrelling in front of the microphone."

Surely your picture is greatly overdrawn. Many of us really like to hear various aspects of any given question; in fact, one of the charms of your writing is your habit of encouraging the judicial frame of mind in your readers.

When we have listened to parsons or persons dealing with the teachings of men who firmly believed, among other beliefs, that the world was flat, would it not be most interesting to hear also the talks and ideas of men trained in

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

CHRISTMAS messages will be broadcast by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. P. Fraser, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. S. G. Holland, at 12.33 p.m. on December 25. They will be heard over 1YA, 2YA, 3YA, 4YA, 2YH, 3ZR and 4YZ.

the spirit of, modern scientific research dealing with the same topics which were of vital interest to the men of bygone days.

For example, all parsons talk of a spiritual state—"God is a spirit"—yet spiritualism is barred as a topic for broadcasting, as is also everything relating to psychic research. Why should this be? We are not all mental cripples. We can take it—and like it.

A questing spirit of controversial curiosity is the very salt of life. Sixty years ago authorities would have prohibited discussion on the marvels of radio and atomic power.

A. T. SMITH (Whangarei).

BEFORE AND AFTER

Sir,—Congratulations to 1YA! On a recent Sunday we heard David Lloyd sing two arias, one from *Don Giovanni* and the other from *The Magic Flute*. The announcer told us before and after the recording who the singer was, and we do appreciate this.

"GRATEFUL" (Dargaville).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"EFSKI" (Christchurch): The accepted pronunciation of the Service is "—efski," and the matter is being taken up with the announcer concerned.

"CURIOUS BUT HOPEFUL" (Christchurch): 2B programmes vary, but 3ZB will no doubt be including a Request Session in the future.

"SOUTHERN CROSS" (Wellington): The subject has frequently been discussed in our columns. We cannot re-open the argument just now.