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## The Far South

ONE of the consequences of New Zealand's position in space is that Polar expeditions call here both going and coming. We have therefore social and personal as well as more serious reasons for interesting ourselves in the Antarctic. We get to know the men who compose these expeditions, and knowing them get to like them. It is still an influence in our lives that some of us knew Shackleton and spoke to Scott, and if those personal contacts are more difficult now that Polar parties are armies and not families, there is much friendliness in New Zealand for Admiral Byrd. The child who never quite grows up in any of us may feel a little jealous of the Admiral, compare his equipment with Scott's, and wish that some British expedition had sailed with even a tenth of the resources made available to this latest American expedition; but we know that we are being childish when we think like that. The Americans went south for two reasons—to test men and materials, and to advance the frontiers of science. They could not do the first if the men and materials were not there, and it would have been foolish to attempt the second without all the equipment science has already made available. It was in no sense at all an attempt to capture the Pole historically; to snatch it away from Amundsen and Scott and pass it on as Byrd's. No one has ever thought of tearing a page out of Norwegian and English school-books and pasting it into American. But most Americans think that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing with all the resources they can command. Instead of being jealous or critical we should be grateful that so much more is known about Antarctica since the American navy went there than anyone knew before; and deep down most of us are grateful.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### SCIENCE IN THE SOVIET

Sir,—Professor Ashby's recent report in *The Listener* was on the whole most interesting and informative, but in fairness to the Soviet Union and to science, strong exception must be taken to some of his remarks, mainly concerning the Vavilov-Lysenko controversy.

In 1940, Vavilov, then director of the Institute of Genetics of the Academy of Sciences, was replaced by "a man called Lysenko whose contributions to science" according to Professor Ashby "are quite negligible." In the same paragraph Professor Ashby says "Lysenko got a strong following because he had worked himself into a position of great influence through his . . . services to agriculture." Perhaps agriculture is not a science or perhaps even the Professor is sometimes unscientific on the question of the Soviet Union. He asserts that Lysenko's theories are "contrary to the facts as we know them."

This nonentity Lysenko, before he replaced Vavilov, was President of the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences, has twice been awarded the First Stalin Prize, and for years previously he held a leading position at the Odessa Institute where he formed most of his theories. According to Hudson and Richens in their booklet (recently published by the Imperial Bureau of Plant Breeding and Genetics) "from these investigations (carried out before 1929) he arrived at his well-known theories of phasic development which, together with the practical technique of vernalisation, brought Lysenko world-wide fame." He has also bred the first varieties which would give economic yields under the most rigorous climatic conditions from the tropics of Central Asia to well above the Arctic Circle.

In 1935 Lysenko courageously attacked the whole body of Mendelian genetics and their exponents inside and outside the Soviet Union. His theories were at first popular only with the practical plant-breeders, farmers, and horticulturists for the simple reason that although his theories were "contrary to the facts as we know them," they enabled the practical men to breed better varieties of plants in a much shorter time than by using the ordinary theories; in other words, these unscientific theories worked in practice, at least in some fields better than those based on Mendel. How correct was the rest of Lysenko's work will only be proved by further experimentation and practice. Lysenko replaced Vavilov because the authorities and, more important, the majority of scientists, considered him to be the better man. In the Soviet Union professors and directors are not appointed in perpetuity, but are answerable to the general body of scientists, students, and lecturers and to the practical people concerned, according to the principles of Soviet bureaucracy in contrast to those of Western democracy. When professors, etc., are replaced, they are either retired or placed in subordinate positions; and I find it just as difficult to see why they should be imprisoned as Professor Ashby will find it to prove that Vavilov was imprisoned.

JOS (Wellington).

(A photograph of Lysenko, together with another opinion upon him, appears on page 10.—Ed.)

### OLD INSTRUMENTS

Sir,—We were interested to read in a recent issue of *The Listener* the article by Zillah Castle on antique musical instruments, and would like to

bring to notice that the Old Colonists' Museum in Auckland has a collection of such antique instruments. The Museum has not set out to assemble such a collection, but over the 30 years it has been in existence it has acquired three organs, two pianos, a seraphine, a flute and a tuning whistle, all dating back 100 years and more. All, with the exception of one organ which was built by William Webster at Hokiangia in 1850, were brought overseas by the early colonists.

One of the pianos, a square one, is believed to have belonged to Lieutenant Governor Hobson and was bought when the effects of the Government in Auckland were sold. Of the three organs, one belonged to the Rev. S. Volkner, of Opatiki, who was killed and eaten by the Maoris in 1865, while another was brought from Christiania in Norway, only to be shipwrecked when the City of Auckland was wrecked on the Otaki Beach. However, 18 months later it was salvaged and sent to the owner in Napier. The third organ, made by William Webster, is a masterpiece of ingenuity and skilful workmanship and was made by him in his leisure time. The ivory on the keyboard, we are told, was laboriously cut by hand-saw from the teeth of the sperm whale, which were obtained from the whalers who spent much time at Russell, Bay of Islands. The black notes were dyed with the same dye as that which the Maoris used for dyeing their mats, and the bellows gauge of brass was filed from the rudder of a rowing-boat. The outside case was made from cedar wood brought from Australia. There was not enough of this to finish the front and music rest, but Mr. Webster, nothing daunted, took a cedar board from his square sofa and so finished the work. It was tuned with the aid of a tuning fork.

It can be imagined what joys these small and to-day strange-looking instruments would bring to a community where the amenities of life were at a minimum; and how precious too, considering the isolation from the outside world of those first colonists.—A. M. RYBURN (Secretary, Old Colonists' Museum, Auckland).

Sir,—Some weeks ago Miss Zillah Castle wrote an article on old musical instruments, mentioning in particular the sad fate of an old musical box at the Wanganui Museum. The box was waiting—like so much else has to wait—on the opportunity to snare a workman to repair it. It was not a case of no appreciation. Half the work is now accomplished, and the sweet tones have delighted many visitors. Another point concerns the 5ft. Maori trumpet. It was

### NEWSPRINT SHORTAGE

WITH this issue we are going back to our normal-sized page of four columns width. There is, however, still a serious world shortage of newsprint and New Zealand is among the countries which are feeling the pinch. So if you have not already done so, we advise you to order your copies of *The Listener* in advance. While newsprint remains in short supply and at the same time the demand for *The Listener* continues to increase, casual purchasers may find themselves disappointed when they try to buy a copy.

an error to say that no one could play it. Most probably any cornettist could play it easily, but as it is locked in a case, no one has had the opportunity to try to do so for many years past.

ANN HARDEN (Wanganui Museum).

### A NATIONAL THEATRE

Sir,—With reference to your article "London to Otautau," in which the need for a national theatre in New Zealand was discussed, I thought you might be interested in the following extract from a recent article in the *Kidderminster Shuttle and Stourport Courier*, entitled "Kidderminster Makes Theatrical History":

"Kidderminster is now the fortunate possessor of one of the country's best equipped 'little theatres,' and Monday's opening of the Playhouse by Sir Barry Jackson (director of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre) was a memorable occasion, crowning a notable achievement by the Nonentities' Society. By purchasing the derelict Opera House—which became a cinema and later a food store during the war years—restoring and equipping it at a total cost of £16,000, the Nonentities have made theatrical history. It is believed to be the only recorded instance of an amateur dramatic society buying a professional

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theatre to be run as such, and the society hopes within 10 years to pay off the outstanding debt of £10,800. The restoration has taken only five months, contractors and sub-contractors winning their race against time, after a hectic last fortnight since the theatre licence was conditionally granted.

"The cost of the theatre was £6,000, restoration and equipment bringing the total up to £16,000. Of the £9,500 received, loans accounted for £4,300. A balance of £6,500 remains to be raised, and adding £4,300 (loans to be repaid), gives a total debt of £10,800. The Playhouse plans not only to be self-supporting but to pay off this debt within ten years. After that time all surplus funds must (by the terms of its trust) be distributed among educational and charitable objects in the borough of Kidderminster." — HARRY PHIPPS (Overseas Correspondent, Birmingham and Midland Counties Association, Wellington).

### BRUCKNER'S SEVENTH SYMPHONY

Sir,—In all presentations of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony up to a recent one from 1YX the repetition of the Scherzo was left out, leaving the poor Trio hanging helplessly in the air. All that would be required is to put the Scherzo side of the disc on again after the Trio had been played. On this occasion, however, 1YX found a new way out of the difficulty: it left both Scherzo and Trio out altogether, reducing the Symphony thereby to three movements. Poor master, in his 50 years of residence he probably has had to turn in his grave many times, but surely never as vigorously as on that evening at 8.45 p.m. New Zealand time! Let them mutilate the Scherzo if they must, but not annihilate it! If by chance the time could be spared to present the work as it was written (it would mean only two extra minutes to the "usual" version) this would make very happy your respectful ORPHEUS IN THE POULTRY-WORLD (Glen Eden).