

APRIL 3, 1947

Life Without Power

IT has been a shock to most of us to discover how dependent we are on electric power; not only materially but mentally too. Although there are some districts in New Zealand in which power still comes in old-fashioned ways, light from oil and heat from wood and coal, nine out of ten of us have moved away from that state of affairs and don't like even temporary returns to it. We feel that life without electric energy is not life at all but misery, and we are making a rather melancholy fuss over the necessity for a time of being uncomfortable. But the remedy is in our own hands at least in part. There is a story in this issue (page 9) which shows what can be achieved with a little thought and sacrifice, and although complete escape will not come till the centre of the North Island is soaked by rain, it is clear that we are all deeply involved in the sins of selfishness and waste. That is not exactly a discovery, of course, but the consequences of it in the present situation have certainly been a revelation. The question in fact is how soon we are going to be good enough and sensible enough to try some self-help. We can't control the weather, but we can, at least to some extent, control ourselves. Nor is there much risk that we shall carry control too far, or even brace ourselves for an effort that a sudden deluge will make unnecessary. When rain comes it is not likely to come freely enough to end all anxiety in a day or two. What falls now, with what we save now, can be held indefinitely if it is not immediately used. But we have to make the effort as individuals, and not waste time asking whether everything has been done officially that could have been done, whether each specific economy called for is necessary, whether the supply authorities are alarming us needlessly, and whether anyone at all other than ourselves is doing his full duty. The sun and the winds and the oceans and the temperature are beyond our grasp. Our heat, light, and radio switches are not.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS**WICKET OR PITCH?**

Sir,—Dictionaries will not settle this question. The *Concise Oxford* says the wicket is three stumps with bails; pitch is the place between and about wickets; state of pitch may be called wicket. This agrees with "Quidnunc." Two other dictionaries follow the *O.E.D.*, three give the pitch and wicket separate entities and two say the pitch is the pitch and is also the wicket. They cannot all be correct.

The M.C.C. Laws of Cricket give the only correct definition of wicket. Law 6 says that each wicket consists of three stumps and two bails pitched opposite and parallel to each other twenty-two yards apart. In all their other Laws this holds good, i.e., "The Popping Crease shall be marked four feet from the wicket," etc. Pitch is not mentioned; it is always the ground. How do you mow this wicket? With a spokeshave?

If, in a revision of Law 9 the M.C.C. says "In week-end starts the wicket shall be mown," have they revised Law 6 also?

Cannot our cricket match announcers refrain from the phrase, "The batsman returned the ball to the bowler down the wicket"? Why "down"? The pitch is usually level. Why not "along the pitch"? The latter phrase is used occasionally; the former peppers some broadcasts. If the batsman hits a ball on to the wicket he is out.

R. PAPE (Tolaga Bay).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

THIS MODERN ART

Sir,—I always enjoy the controversy on Modern Art, especially when plain citizens take a hand in it. Artists are only public servants, after all; and the public must watch them closely. We don't like being "bounced," we like civility, and, above all, we long for good service—the type of service Shakespeares and Da Vinci gave their customers, work which appeals to educated people from every class. And the public are very generous in their taste, feeling that an artist must protect his idiosyncrasy until it matures. Young artists may not be understood, but they are generously tolerated.

Now, this little matter of Modern Art! Why so many complaints? Even the famous Matisse is heckled. At eighty-something his idiosyncrasy must be very mature, he is acclaimed as "one of the greatest living painters" by people who ought to know (though they usually don't), and yet the public everywhere are harshly critical. And the notorious Picasso!

If there is even a little truth in the statement that "artists are public servants" our problem is partly solved, for the Matisse-Picasso collection seem to favour form before colour, the subjective before the objective. The better painters of this group are superb technicians. Their work is seen by "John Citizen" as he sees a technical work on Mathematical Physics, rather too abstruse for general reading and about a subject quite outside his everyday interests. "John Citizen" does not begrudge the teaching of Mathematical Physics, of course. But he does, and I think rightly, object when the purely subjective works of peculiar minds are brought to his attention as works of art. I could write the most ridiculous book on Mathematical Physics possible, because I know practically nothing about the subject. But, no student would read far

into it. Some professor would have reviewed the book and pronounced it worthless.

Now, art is not a matter on which we accept blindly the opinions of professors. An artist is entitled to say he has been misunderstood, that another generation will realise his quality. But a whole movement, such as has been built around Picasso, and which has persisted for half a century, will not succeed in "bouncing" anyone of sound mind into the belief that it must be good—because-so-and-so-says-it-is. I think A. R. D. Fairburn argued similarly for Picasso over the radio last year. An artist's mind must possess some generality, otherwise how can he have good taste? Picasso may believe that his mind is sound and that most of the people in the world have unsound minds, but the discipline of time will place his art conceptions with those of James Joyce.

To sum up, I think the value of the schools grouped as Modern Art, in this century, will prove to be mainly academic. Artists will learn much from a study of Picasso, but their impressions will be subjective and weak, serving to reinforce their individual idiosyncrasies but not to modify them. The public has no need to be submissive when faced with "A work of art." Art critics are notoriously wrong in their judgments of contemporary work.

P.O.C. (Auckland).

WORSHIP IN MENTAL HOSPITALS

Sir,—We have in our midst, adjacent to the four main centres, communities of some one thousand people who have neither church nor chapel in which to worship. I refer to the inmates of our Mental Hospitals, fully 75 per cent. of whom are capable of attending Divine Worship all or part of the time. At present dining halls and the like are used by the Chaplains and visiting Clergy. Even so the attendances are often larger than are to be found in spacious buildings outside. Religion plays a big part in the healing of the mentally afflicted, and the Gospels record that Our Lord did much of His work among them. I feel, therefore, that if Christians realised the comfort and joy a church "of their own," in the grounds, would bring to these people some effort would be made to meet the need. This is not a matter for the State—the State is doing a noble work with its medical service and care—but rather one for the Church. Surely the churches have a responsibility to discharge to the sick in mind, a growing number in these sad days.

MATT. 4.24 (Christchurch).

MAORI PLACE-NAMES

Sir,—Viewed broadly, any attempt made by a pakeha to pronounce correctly Maori place-names, or, for that matter, any other "racial" place names, must be beset by many pitfalls. I am not suggesting that the task is altogether an impossible one. I have heard impeccable Maori pronunciation fall from European tongues, losing neither its beauty nor its meaning in the process. But such cases are exceptional. They arise, not from any "book study," however deep, but from long and intimate association with a race of men whose language—mother tongue—has not been contaminated by foreign influences. To set out in pakeha form the correct pronunciation of Whangarei, which in itself can be nothing but a

pakeha-ism, is impossible without a real knowledge of the Maori language itself. It isn't just the difference between "tomayto" and "tomarto." It amounts to the difference between two sets of vocal expression. "Whanga" is a bad beginning for a study of Whangarei. When a real Maori utters those first two syllables he lets fall from his tongue two very musical sounds, as nearly as they can be conveyed in our polyglot speech—"far-ngar". The oft-recurring "nga" in the Maori tongue is difficult if not altogether impossible for the pakeha tongue. The Maori will blend it with other syllables, leaving no rough edges. With the three syllables Wha-nga-rei (expressed in English) he will produce a complex musical sound which cannot fall otherwise than pleasantly on the ear.

If we are searching for truth it will avail us little to hark back on old-time European versions. The old-time European corrupted a beautiful language by

More letters from listeners will be found on Pages 16 and 17.

means of honest endeavour. The Maori, more especially in the younger category, is doing it to-day, in an endeavour to appear modern.

Yet place-names are only an item, worthy as the effort to unravel them may be. With all due respect to those who seek to do so, my advice, such as it is, would follow these lines: Find an old-time Maori—they still survive—and get him to say Whangarei. You will be surprised if not delighted. Even when he pronounces "Whanga" as a single syllable you will get its music, and be pleased, if not chastened. The *Listener* can be commended for opening its columns to this subject. Trial and error, if errors are corrected where possible, may help to carry the music of the Maori into words that are part and parcel of our everyday lives. It is easy to criticise, but how are we to know that the critic is an authority. He is only groping if he seeks to build his case on simple ABC as we know it. I would class as an authority one who can converse with an "old timer" without wrinkling the old timer's brow, and there are many or shall I say some—of these in your midst. I have always found that the real lovers of the Maori language have white skins.

PRAIKA EA (Birkenhead).

INTERFERENCE WITH NELSON

Sir,—I wish, like many others, that something could be done to prevent the Fijian station getting over the top of our Nelson station. It's very bad at times, but we are living in hopes that something can be done.

P. H. BROMELL (Mapua).

(The technical section of the NZBS advises that as the two stations are on the same frequency the interference is unavoidable. No other frequency less subject to interference is available, but the power of the Nelson station will be increased as soon as equipment and premises can be arranged and this will remedy the trouble in the Nelson district.—Ed.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

L. D. Austin (Wellington): After your "40 years in journalism" you should know (a) that all papers have "early" and "late" pages; (b) that the fact that your photograph could not be used after a Tuesday does not mean that Tuesday is the deadline for all material.

Cantabile (Paeroa): We are informed that, in the conditions for the recent contest, Clause 10 was slightly altered so that the winner of the previous contest was eligible to be adjudged winner of subsequent contests.