

LISTENER

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Price Threepence

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Shifting Sands

IT should make us pause that the Prime Minister's last word to us before he left for London was a warning that our security, instead of being based on firm ground, had no foundation but the "shifting sands of treaties." Coming on top of Mr. Bevin's warnings, it was the most disturbing statement we had heard for a long time from anyone so close to the facts. Mr. Fraser knows what there is to be known on the free-circulation side of the curtain. He knows what Downing Street thinks about the prospects of peace and what is passing through the official mind of Washington, and he clearly left for London heavy-hearted. The only light in the darkness is the strong feeling most people have that this time they will not be humbugged or deceived. Nations will not be asked to walk a plank that will not carry the weight. They will not be told, and if they were they would not believe, that another war is "unthinkable." They know that it is not only "thinkable" but easily possible. Mr. Fraser said plainly that diplomacy was being frustrated by duplicity and that there could at the moment be "no enforcement against aggression." He said in other words that to look to the United Nations for security was blind and dangerous. It is trusting in words and not in deeds. Until the words express a reality they are like the castles of cardboard and paint that princes enter and leave in plays. It was the Prime Minister's melancholy duty to tell us this before he went away, and it is our duty now not to misunderstand him: to face the fact that peace hangs by a thread, but to avoid jumping to the conclusion that war is inevitable. It can happen when the sand shifts that rock is found underneath.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

CROSSWORD PUZZLES

Sir,—There are those who think it would be unfortunate if the suggestion by "Had It" were adopted. *The Listener*, in addition to its primary function, evidently aims to lead its public to a greater appreciation of general culture. It has been found that the puzzles are helping to further this aim. There are, for example, not a few people here who, through contact with the puzzles, have increased and widened their study of literature, while others have taken it up seriously, perhaps for the first time. It is reasonable to suppose that the effect has been the same elsewhere. In any case, in the "Shakespeare, etc., stuff" there is usually a context which, with the letters discovered from other clues, should assist anyone to puzzle out the missing words.

INTERESTED (Christchurch).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Had It" (Timaru) has, perhaps, some slight justification for his complaint about some of the words or clues in your puzzles. But after all your journal

large institutions are no substitute for a good home. It is significant that the Child Welfare branch under John Beck and his successors should have given a lead in recognising this. The State boards out non-delinquent children whenever foster-homes can be found for them, and the majority of its delinquent charges. And this despite such excellent institutions as that Levin, which I should recommend your complacent correspondents to visit before they praise their own facilities for recreation and handicrafts. Private institutions, being predominantly religious, are concerned with supervising the upbringing of their charges. "Boarding-out" is as rare with them as it is common with the State.

Talk of "cottage homes" sounds well. But with shortage of funds, shortage of building materials, shortage of trained staff, shortage of married couples willing to accept the pittance usually offered, the number of cottage homes with a foster-father and mother is negligible. The few that there are merely serve to emphasise the shortcomings of the large institution.

WHEN CHRISTMAS COMES

You will be wondering in a week or two what to give for Christmas—how much to spend, and what to do about the friend who does not want something to eat or smoke or tie round his neck or put in his pocket. Give him a subscription to "The Listener." It will cost you only twelve shillings, and it will entertain him every day for 52 weeks.

To help all readers to whom this suggestion appeals we are opening a Christmas gift register now. Get your friend's name on that, and we will do the rest. Applications, with remittance and gift instructions, should be sent to the

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endeavours to set a musical and literary standard and names of authors, composers, etc., are not out of place. I still greatly enjoy the solution of these puzzles, although my musical education was neglected.

By the way, did not R.W.C. make a slip in Clue 8 down in the issue of September 17, where Burns is alleged to have considered Norman blood inferior to simple faith? Does not this reference come from Tennyson's "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" in the couplet:

Kind hearts are more than coronets
And simple faith than Norman blood;
Long may R.W.C. flourish.

PED AGOG (Westport).

Sir,—I agree with "Had It." *The Listener* crossword is no longer clever, but stupid. Or am I?

E. C. RUSSELL (New Plymouth).

Sir,—It seems hardly necessary to defend R.W.C. from your correspondent "Had It." The type of crossword puzzle he desires can be found in most daily papers and magazines. R.W.C. provides us with something different and infinitely more entertaining. It is really a reflection on the general standard of education in New Zealand to assert that *The Listener* puzzles are too difficult. R.W.C.'s clues, though tricky, are always legitimate, and often very amusing. I hope she will not be prevailed upon by "Had It's" criticism to alter her style.

R. S. W. HUNT (Tauranga).

ORPHANAGE WITHOUT ORPHANS

Sir,—Mutual back-slapping in no way modifies the conclusion of the Curtis report, ably interpreted by D.M.M., that

There is a point I wish to make in this correspondence. It is that the child in an institution has no "rights"—he is at the mercy of authority which may be benign or may not, in a sense that other children are not. The occasional visit of a Child Welfare officer does not serve to protect him. It should be impossible for a lad in an institution to be so severely beaten that he has to be removed to hospital; it should be impossible to force girls to toil long hours at the wash-tub with only the hope of Heaven to sustain them; to imprison institution children for weeks at a time within their own grounds, because no adult has the time to take them out. These things are happening in our children's institutions. Until we, as the public, interest ourselves in conditions in these institutions and in the children themselves, they will continue to happen. A few excellent institutions in no way prevent witless cruelty from characterising the worst.

I trust that D.M.M. will be granted space to describe a scheme which has been fruitful in Britain—the "uncles and aunts" scheme whereby the child is at least afforded an opportunity of confiding in someone not officially connected with the institution in which he is—yes, —imprisoned.

A. R. MALCOLM (Dunedin).

Sir,—D.M.M.'s article has brought, I hope, before a large public, the urgent question of necessary changes in social work with children. That some institutions, I hope many, are being run with enlightened ideas, does not alter the fact that many are not. I have experience and know how ignorant the pub-

lic, and even the boards controlling Homes, can be of the real conditions.

Too prevalent is the idea that children are lucky to have food and shelter—such a small part of the needs of a child who through the breakdown of its normal family life, has had some major emotional upset. But where is the trained staff to deal with such casualties? Surely this is the first step to be considered by those running the institutions in this country. Many are run by the Churches. Would a Church open a hospital, and then staff it, with any untrained personnel that could be obtained? Yet we are dealing with the souls and often sorely-stricken minds of the children in our Homes. If each Church were to open a training cottage, with a few children in residence, as a training centre for staff for their Homes throughout the country, I am quite sure sufficient girls of vocation would be forthcoming. It says little for the effect of the Church's teaching if not.

Homes at their best should be regarded as Receiving Stations. Are there not sufficient Christian people in our Churches, and in the community as a whole, to undertake the nominal adoption of a child for his childhood years? If it is not possible to take entire charge, surely every child in a Home should have some home in the community where he is always welcome and where he can turn for help and friendship.

In other words, children should not be brought up in institutions, but kept there awaiting some better solution.

"UP AND AT 'EM" (Dunedin).

Sir,—This discussion interests me, as I worked for several years in an Orphanage. My experience is that inside these homes individual attention is missed through staffs having no time owing to the amount of domestic work allotted to them. These children develop an inferiority complex through being treated as a crowd. Outside the Orphanages I find that boys (especially) in positions are continually having their upbringing thrown at them by an unthinking public. It hurts, I have seen it. A course in child study and the child mind would be a valuable help. I can endorse everything D.M.M. says in connection with treatment of behaviour problems. I hope that this discussion will lead to real progress in this important work.

STAFF WORKER.

EARTH HOUSES

Sir,—I have read with considerable interest the articles in your paper by R. Ammer, Wellington, on building with earth, and the correspondence arising out of them. Some of your readers may be interested to know that the subject is very expertly dealt with by Ronald Duncan, in his book, *Home-Made Home*, published by Faber and Faber, London. Duncan has experimented very successfully on his farm in Cornwall; and is not afraid of pointing out the snags as well as the advantages of such methods of building. It is passing strange in days when the housing shortage is acute in so many countries that Governments have not paid more attention to the possibilities of building in this way, if only as a temporary measure. Perhaps New Zealand will set the pace as it has done in so many other directions.

WILLIAM J. TULL
(Leeds, Yorkshire).