



LEFT: The township of Aspen, with the amphitheatre in the foreground.

## MORE LIGHT ON GOETHE

Aspen, Colorado,  
JULY 11.

A LITTLE over 50 years ago, the world's largest silver nugget was mined at Aspen, 8,000 feet up in the Colorado Rockies; it weighed nearly a ton and was 95 per cent. pure ore. The town then had a population of 15,000, 27 lawyers, a horse-drawn tram and an opera house. The Silver Repeal Bill of 1893 ruined Aspen overnight. Settlers packed out leaving furniture and unwashed dishes. About a thousand of them stayed, and these families have managed somehow to live here ever since. The unused houses fell down, were burned down, or bought for firewood. Until lately a good house could be bought for the price of its land tax. In 1946 a Chicago manufacturer noticed the ski-ing possibilities of Aspen; he formed a company which bought the only remaining hotel and other property, and built the world's longest chair-lift. This can take 225 persons per hour to the height of 11,300 feet in 35 minutes without the waste of any footpounds. Now in July, 1949, Aspen runs more Goethe scholars per acre than any other part of the world, and more people who are carrying around the works of Goethe with every intention of reading them.

America celebrates here the bicentennial of Goethe's birth in a three-week programme which includes lectures and symposia on pretty well every aspect of Goethe's life and thought, much of the vast amount of music Goethe's work inspired, music that inspired Goethe, and other music not too

THIS year is the bicentennial of Goethe's birth. The Americans, characteristically, got off to a good start in July with an impressive Convocation held at Aspen, Colorado, where the guest of honour was Albert Schweitzer. This account of the gathering was sent to "The Listener" by DOROTHEA TURNER, of Auckland, who took part in the celebrations. Listeners are likely to hear more about Goethe later in August, when the bicentennial is celebrated in Germany, at Frankfurt (where New Zealand will be represented by Dr. A. C. Keys, Professor of Modern Languages at Auckland University College), and the NZBS will mark the anniversary on its due date, August 28, with a special 40-minute evening programme from 2YA.

modern. Among the lecturers are Albert Schweitzer (from Lambareme, French Equatorial Africa), José Ortega y Gasset (Madrid), Robert Hutchins (Chicago), T. M. P. Mahadevan (Madras), E. R. Curtius (Bonn), Karl Reinhardt (Frankfurt a/Main), Gerardus van der Leeuw (Groningen), Stephen Spender, and Thornton Wilder. The musicians are Dimitri Mitropoulos and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Artur Rubinstein (piano), Erica Morini and Nathan Milstein (violins), Piatigorsky (cello), Dorothy Maynor, Jerome Hines, Herta Glaz, and Mark Harrell (singers). Vronsky and Babin play two pianos. There is a symposium each morning, a concert in the afternoon, and a lecture at night. In this third and last week everybody is pretty tired and confused, conscious only of having failed to grasp more than a part of what



has gone on—but pretty happy about it all the same, and confident that it will sort itself out later when there is time to think.

It was thought that in Aspen we could concentrate better without city distractions. This afternoon Mitropoulos took his orchestra to task for superficial playing: "You let the beauty of the scenery distract you from being beautiful *within* where the music should come from." And indeed most of the visitors have the Rockies to explore for the first time, as well as Goethe. Aspen is 40 miles from the railway, and in the fastest trains Chicago is 24 hours away to the east, Los Angeles and San Francisco as far to the west. This is the log-cabin country of the wild west movies—*Red Stallion of the Rockies* was filmed recently five miles away. The deep rose-red I had thought

a peculiarity of technicolour photography is the true colour of the Colorado mountains and soil. Against this the wild flowers are massed, mostly vivid blue. Columbine, the State flower of Colorado, grows up to the snow line; blue lupins, pentstemon, giant myosotis, wild aster and Indian paintbrush take charge of the spaces left by firs and aspens. The streams are full of trout, fierce horses can be hired by those who dare, and for the reflective there is beaver-watching. At the top of the valley the motor road to Santa Fe crosses Independence Pass at a level a few feet higher than the top of Mount Cook, and last week we watched ski races held there in defiance of an unusually hot midsummer.

At the foot of the township an amphitheatre has been built for lectures and concerts. It is in a field of lupins cut on two sides by the noisy Roaring Fork creek. The covering is a circus tent of orange and white. Each afternoon the clear day is interrupted by a storm. On three successive days the thunder struck at *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, the overture to *Egmont*, Liszt's *Faust* symphony, and rather improved them all. On the fourth the storm came lower, silenced a strong performance of Schumann's third symphony ("Rhenish"), flooded the orchestra off the stage, and imprisoned a delighted audience in the tent for two hours.

### Central Figure

Among porters and waitresses in Aspen are many students who have hitch-hiked from far corners of the States to hear Dr. Schweitzer, and there are elderly pilgrims too. Dr. Schweitzer is 74 and this is his first visit to this continent. For the Aspen lectures, the Goethe Bicentennial Foundation has offered him an endowment for his African hospital, and so far he has not accepted other invitations to lecture, though this week Chicago University has the honour of giving him an honorary degree. (Robert Hutchins, President of the Goethe Foundation, is also President of the University of Chicago.) He appears to enjoy America much more than he expected to do. The many-faceted Goethe seemed obscure until Dr. Schweitzer came at the end of the first week of the Festival to present a survey of the subject, assembling the essential detail into logical form. His first lecture was in French, so well interpreted that the interpreter remains anonymous. The second, in German, was interpreted by Thornton Wilder, who put in a great deal of expression. Dr. Schweitzer is a small, quiet man who seems to dwarf the people around him. His face and speech and large dark eyes have the humour that is missing from his writings. He refused the protection and seclusion offered him and made himself accessible to everyone who wished to speak to him; he answered all questions, laughed for hundreds of amateur photographers, autographed books and photographs by the hour. His wife is of the same disposition. "Always he committed himself to the very limit of his possibilities," as he said of Goethe.

### The Value of Doubt

José Ortega y Gasset, from a very different culture, is more enigmatic, and less approachable. A small, tough man,

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