

LOFTY IS HANGING IN FOUR THOUSAND HOMES

LUCKILY for Lofty Blomfield, there is no Hitler or Mussolini running the New Zealand Army. Fritsch was too popular. He died in Poland. Balbo was too popular. He died in Africa. There is no one here to say that Lofty is too popular, but there are thousands to say that he is very popular. They have been saying it for the last week or two by mail to *The Listener*, in letters worded: "Enclosed find threepence in stamps; please send your photograph of Lofty Blomfield."

By hundreds each day these letters have streamed into the office, and by hundreds each day the photographs,

the wrestling ring since his enlistment, probably because of ties of duty, and the difficulty of regular training, made a come-back that gave the championship to a New Zealander.

New Zealand too often has bowed the knee to foreigners. Anyone with a foreign-sounding name has been able to come into the country and hold it in the cup of his hand.

In wrestling it has been the same. The big draws have nearly all come from outside and brought their queer names and romantic reputations with them. Husky as they may be, the country lads have pretended to remain country lads. Here is one secret of Lofty's popularity. A New Zealander from top to toes, and the intervening space is considerable, hence the name—he has met the most famous of the overseas big men on their own ground, created his own distinct reputation, and now won his own reward.

Mystery Story

The following paragraph, with the above heading, appeared in a recent issue of "Time" (July 22):

"Thousands of visiting Democrats and a few donkeys appeared in Chicago (for the Democratic Convention). Most of the donkeys (on the hoof and on signs) were soon removed. Exactly why, delegates to the Convention had to judge for themselves; unexplained mysteries were the rule in Chicago. On a wall of the Convention's vast (21,000 seats) Chicago Stadium, a huge picture of a donkey was replaced by a spot-lighted, grisly sketch of Franklin Roosevelt. Assiduously distributed were 500,000 campaign buttons, adorned not by a donkey but by a bright red cock-o'-the-walk and the legend: 'Just Roosevelt.'"

printed on art paper as promised in our issue of August 16, have streamed back to *Listener* readers who are also Blomfield fans.

The week before last, ten days after the offer was first published, the total number of inquiries was falling off a little. It had been four hundred, five hundred, six hundred, seven hundred daily, with a week-end boost on Monday. By the Friday it had dropped to a mere three hundred a day.

Last week the flood was still a good-sized river, and showed no signs of reducing itself.

Lofty may be in the Army, and he may be going overseas. Whatever happens, Lofty's photograph will be in several thousand New Zealand homes.

Lofty's Come-back

Popular even before he won the British Empire Wrestling Championship, Lofty's stocks rose even loftier when the Championship ran out of the ring from McCready when Katan took a fall in Wellington Town Hall. This was Lofty's chance. The Sergeant-Major, who had not been quite so prominent in

Women Like Him —

Many of his fans, if our mail is any indication, are women; at least fifty per cent. A lot are small boys, and some, small girls.

Only in the Post Office has Lofty's popularity been really tested. No doubt the Director-General likes him well enough, because every application to *The Listener* office has meant tuppence on the envelope and threepence in stamps inside.

In some cases, in fact, it has meant more than that. In these days of tuppenny postage not everyone has penny stamps in the house. Instead of threepence in stamps some people have sent fourpence—two tuppenny stamps—and at least one woman asks us to see that the extra penny goes to the Patriotic Fund.

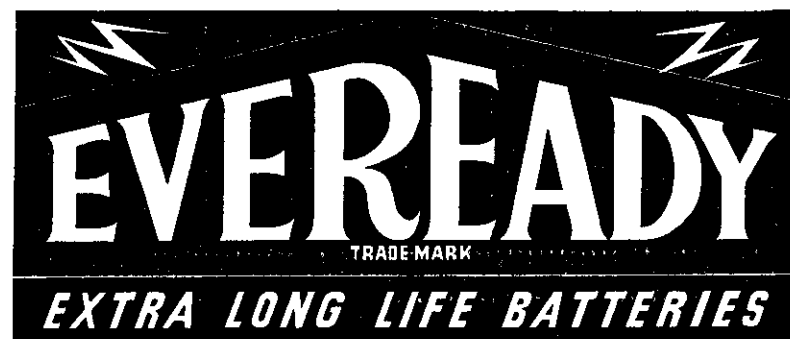
But for the mail clerks it has not been such fun. Our inward mail comes easily enough to Box 1070. Our outward mail, so suddenly increased, has to be sorted, and the applications have come in from just about every place in New Zealand, big or small.

— And So Do Miners

However, whatever he may have suffered in the thoughts of the postal employees, Lofty makes up in his undoubted popularity with other classes. Miners, for example, go for him in a very big way. From every known mining centre in the country applications have arrived by the bunch.

New Zealand is not alone in admiration for the long piece of wrestler. The week *The Listener* carried his face on the cover, Station 2YA broadcast the usual announcement and was picked up in Australia. By the first mail came a request for the photograph, with one shilling and sixpence in overseas exchange for Mr. Nash.

But Lofty's greatest triumph has been won in the heart of a fan in the North Island. She wrote to say that she has some of her family abroad, serving with the Forces, but she thinks Lofty ought to be kept here. In these times of stress he evidently makes a good antidote to "London Calling," and this correspondent wants him retained for amusement purposes.



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