

LISTENER

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Christmas At Home

IT is a sobering thought that every British citizen over 40 will this week have lived through his ninth war Christmas and every citizen over 26 through his sixth. The figures almost justify the remark of a cynical pacifist, that the nations are so anxious for peace they start fighting for it every five or six years. In fact, every nation in the world wants peace but one; and every government. But as E. M. Forster has pointed out—E. M. Forster who loathes violence more than he loathes anything but tyranny—we have "got to go on with this hideous fight." We will go on with it.

But we do not have to go on without a smile. We are human beings and we need not be afraid to remain human beings, laughing when we can and weeping when we must; and we certainly don't have to weep over our woes all the time. We are caught in a hideous fight, and we have taken some sickening blows. We must suppose that we shall have to take more. The fight will go on, and as long as it lasts it will crowd our minds, control our movements, make nonsense of most of our plans. We shall not escape from it for one hour until it ends—unless we are clods without thoughts or feelings. But we are giving blows as well as taking them, and one day we shall give the blow that will liberate the world.

In the meantime we are what the prophet called the prisoners of hope—chained to the wheel but gradually turning it our own way. We shall turn it more surely if we open our minds this week to all the thoughts Christmas brings us in normal times. It is not so much a matter of eating and drinking—though it is no sin to indulge ourselves in those ways, if we decently can—as of being festive in spirit and relaxing the tension of our minds. As it happens, the hearts of many of us are on distant battlefields, and if there is one thing of which we are sure, we may be sure it is that there will be no long faces among our sons and brothers in uniform. It is not forgetting them, but remembering them as they would wish to be remembered—encouraging them and cheering them and proving ourselves worthy of them—to be as nearly ourselves as we can be at home whatever is happening somewhere else.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

PERSONAL WAR-EFFORT

Sir,—I shall be grateful if you will print the following as part of my personal war-effort:

I.

DESIRE TO DOMINATE

No one need look, in balked bewilderment or
botheration,
For what upsets the world. Desire for domination.
Is causing all the strife.
Ask any husband, wife
Or ma-in-law, what most breaks happy homes, and
you'll be told
That it is not so much that hearts grow cold
That someone (not the one asked, of course) desires
to sway
The whole "menage"—demands that one's own way
So much that no one else can bear
The strains imposed. The wife who seeks to wear
The trousers, or the husband who dictates
What his "belov'd" shall wear, so irritates
The other that endurance-point is passed.
The trodden worm adder becomes at last.
What of this? See these words of mine addressed
To whomsoever has within his breast
Desire to dominate.
Hear me, worm though I be, with dragon fierceness
state

The truth that who so seeks to dominate
His fellows meets a dreadful, doleful fate.
Nebuchadnezzar, seen eating grass,
Benito and Adolf in Bremner Pass,
Bonaparte, far-apart, cooling his heels,
Stalin in Moscow, the slipperiest of eels,
How are these different? In only one way!
Some of them had, some are having, their day —
That brief hectic day, so soon ended, enjoyed
By all who with dreams of world-conquest have
toyed.

This dread Domination, I care not who 'tis
Desires it most now. To find out's not my "biz".
But, whoever it may be,
He is doomed soon to see
That his bubble must burst, or be pricked and go
bang,
So smashing him up that to find aught to hang
High aloft, as a warning to others, will be
Too much trouble to take. There'll be nought left
to see.

Would-be world-dominators, take heed and beware!
Go on with your antics, now, fools, if you dare!
Don't scowl and look black at this threatening worm,
Who has told you your fate! Though you wriggle
and squirm,
You can never escape from the fearsome foul fate
Of the fool who his fellows would dominate.
You may hide or may stalk through the world look-
ing grim
But your cup's filling up. Look! It's nearing the
brim!
Aha! How I've startled you! Why jump and start?
I knew all such tyrants are cowards at heart.

II.

SHIRTS

Shirts! Shirts! Shirts! Why this monstrous plague
of shirts?
Nearly all the chaps who strut in them seem squibs
or squirts.
Green shirts! Black shirts!
Tight shirts! Slack shirts!
For pity's sake grow tired of them, and take to
skirts!
Skirts don't suit you? You are men?
I shall have to look again.
There has not come into view

Any manliness in you—
Not in any of your crew,
Brown, grey, black, green, blue, red shirted
Only manliness perverted,
Twisted, mangled, introverted.
Oh, these shirts, shirts, shirts! This appalling craze
for shirts
Linked with tyranny and lust, linked with all that
grieves and hurts—
Shirts all worn by beings who bow
To the puppets who know how
Men can be suborned and made
Of a show of force afraid.

More "Letters from Listeners" will be
found on Page 12

Shirts! Shirts! Shirts! Millions of machine-made
shirts,
Covering men being made machine-like. Oh, it
controvers—
This machine-plan
All that makes man
Really manly. May its makers soon meet their
deserts!
Shirts! Shirts! Shirts! I'm made furious by these
shirts!
But I know the fate of foolish man who fondly
flirts
With desire for domination—
Death, destruction, and damnation;
So my fury I restrain.
Manliness will live again
When has passed this monstrous regiment of shirts,
shirts, shirts.

—ANON (Cambridge).

MAX PIRANI

Sir,—I feel that all lovers of the best in pianoforte music will agree that listeners are really grateful for the opportunities offered by the NBS of hearing this most talented pianist. His recitals have been unique both as regards his choice of programmes and his happy facility in interpretation of the works he has performed. It is not too much to say that we in New Zealand have rarely heard a pianist of such outstanding ability, and as he leaves for Australia he may feel assured that we have thoroughly enjoyed his music, and wish we could have heard more of it.

—MUSICIAN (Christchurch).

FIVE TRANSPORTS.

Sir,—Perhaps Mr. Bernard Magee and his readers would be interested to know the names of those five transports which sailed from Alexandria for Taranto twenty-five years ago. This convoy, which conveyed so many thousands of soldiers recruited from all parts of the Empire, sailed the Mediterranean for many months together, and Armistice Day, 1913, found them still together safely at anchor in Taranto Harbour, after many attacks during those perilous months.

The Ormonde (Orient Line) was doing her maiden voyage, the other four were the Norman (Union Castle), Indarra and Canberra (Australian) and the Maliva (P. & O.). Then, as now, little was to be seen of the Italian navy, but Mr. Magee may recall, passing on the starboard side immediately upon entering the harbour, the Italian battle-cruiser lying keel uppermost. Somebody had placed a bomb aboard. The people of Taranto must by now be accustomed to seeing their beautiful battleships reclining on anything but an even keel.—L. J. BAIN (Milburn).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"JUVENIS" and several other correspondents. See footnote on P. 15 of last issue.