

# LISTENINGS

Perpetrated and illustrated by KEN ALEXANDER

## CURTAIN!

IT is reported from Rome that Italian students demonstrated against America a few days ago. They assembled outside the Piazza Venezia and shouted for Mussolini, who did not appear.

A few months ago Mussolini would have bounded on to the balcony in his best bib-and-tucker if three ice-cream vendors and a stray dog had demonstrated. It was as automatic as a cuckoo hopping out of a clock. But a lot of sand has flowed under his army's heels since then.

There is a pathetic ballad entitled "Ring Down the Curtain, I Can't Sing To-night," which seems to fit the situation.

We can imagine what went on behind that curtain when the students gave the old college yell against America the

other day — the chief assistant High-cockalorum saying, "They cry for you, Il Duce; shall I fling wide the portals to the balcony, as of yore?"

"Fling nothing!" answers Mussolini. "I've had my fling — and what a fling! Fasten the shutters and draw the curtains — I won't fling to-night."

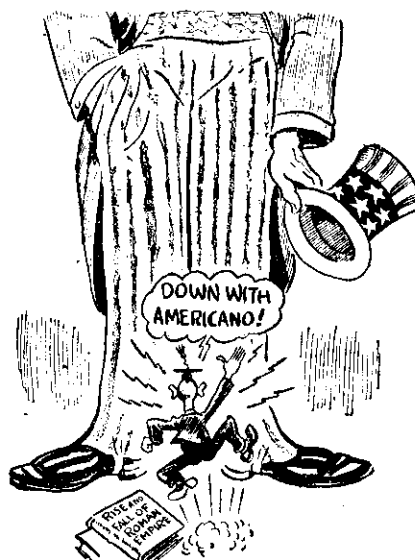
"But—surely, your Excellencissimo! They cry for you."

"Yes, I know — I taught them to. But there are far too many crying for me as it is. I could cry for myself — very easily."

"But they demonstrate against America, Il Duce. They're good at that kind of thing. Remember how nicely they demonstrated against England — one of the nicest demonstrations you could get anywhere."

"Yes; very nice; and see where it got us. I'm beginning to hate students. Sec-

ondary education is over-rated, anyway. If they *must* demonstrate, why can't they demonstrate against someone safe, like the Eskimos or the Hottentots.



America, indeed! The trouble with students is that they don't study the newspapers."

"It's a great pity, Il Duce. Remember the good old days when you stood on

the balcony and shouted, 'Shall we fight?' and how they roared, 'We shall fight!'"

"Yes. And doesn't it just prove that you can't believe all you hear?"

"But it was a grand display, Duce. You used to look like Caesar."

"I did. And now I feel like Caesar's ghost. I don't know how I will ever hold my chin up again. My days of demonstrating are over — that is, unless I can break into the used-car business."

"But aren't you even going to *defy* America? I always thought you defied so well. And the way you issued challenges!"

"Yes, I was pretty good, wasn't I? But the trouble with issuing challenges is that it gets about so. The challenged get to hear about it, and that kind of spoils the fun. Think of Greece — no, don't let's think of Greece!"

"I'll tell you what, Excellencissimo! What about defying *everyone* over the microphone. You can wear your best conqueror's uniform and give yourself a proper break."

"But—"

"Yes, I've thought of that. *We needn't* have it switched on."

"What a brain! Antonio, bring in the microphonio. I'm going to defy that Hitler."

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