

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

MARCH 21, 1941

## EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.I.

Post Office Box 1070.

Telephone, 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

For Subscription and Advertising Rates see Page 40.

## "Their Nerves Have Held"

IN a recent issue of *London Calling* a BBC commentator says of the women of England that "their nerves have held" throughout the period of total war. But the nerves of women always hold throughout a war or the war stops; whether it is total or partial. Nor is it at all certain that men have stronger nerves than women if by strength we mean toughness, and it would be strange if they had. Most of the risks men take women take—crossing streets, driving cars, flying, and so on—and all women normally encounter one risk, perhaps half a dozen times over, that no man has ever faced since he became man. When we say that women's nerves are not as strong as men's we really mean that women are more sensitive.

But this of course does not rob women of their right to the tribute the world is now paying them. Their conduct in England during the last six months has lifted them high above the reach of flattery. They have not only endured—a great but still negative virtue. They have endured cheerfully—an enormously greater achievement. The commentator we began by quoting was moved to admiration by the conduct of his secretary, who arrived, he said, day after day, immaculate in appearance, and unfalteringly cheerful in demeanour; as do tens of thousands of typists, shop-girls, factory-hands, nurse-maids, in London every day. It is something to talk about, something to wonder at, something that London has never seen before. But it is something that the history of mankind should have made us expect if we could have believed in advance that such appalling tests would come.

The war will not be lost by women. It may on the contrary be won by women, now that it is a total war waged not only in the high-ways and byways of land, sea, and air, but in bedrooms, and kitchens, and cellars, and subways. For victory will be with the side whose women retain their courage longest and are last to lose their cheerfulness. Very few, if any, will ever fight as soldiers. Very few are fit to fight in that way. But they are fighting and will go on fighting in schools, hospitals, homes, offices, factories, and shops, fighting with their patience, their cheerfulness, their endurance, their nerves, and these will hold.

# 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 in 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.

## WHY RUSSIA LOOKS ON.

Sir,—Your leader of February 28 suggests that Russia has not resisted Germany because she cannot, being too dirty and disorganised. Hitler apparently disagrees with you, for London press cables declare that he has 1,500,000 men, a third of his entire army, on the Russian frontier. Surely that spells fear of Russia. Surely the real reason Russia hasn't resisted is that she hasn't been attacked.

Sigrid Undset and Professor Hogben, a mathematician, are quoted as witnesses of dirty Russia. Well, Russia covers one-sixth of the globe, and both your witnesses apparently took no more than a hurried railway journey through it. How much of living conditions over a sixth of the globe could they have seen? Yet Hogben declares that the "whole" country "is one vast slum!"

The truth is that Russia has had to sacrifice a great deal in the way of immediate improvement in living conditions in order to lay the foundations of a gigantic industrial system. She has had to prefer factories and machines to butter. At the same time she has felt it necessary to arm and equip an immense army and air force, starting almost from scratch. And this in a vast Empire stretching from

## In Memoriam

(Michael Joseph Savage)

*He is not dead who wrought with voice and pen  
Until the torch became a living flame—  
A charter graven on the hearts of men—  
A heritage our children shall acclaim.*

—H. GALLAGHER, Wellington.

Europe to Japan and from the Arctic to the tropics, inhabited by barbarous and semi-barbarous people originally illiterate, dirty and untaught, speaking a multitude of tongues from Chinese to Ukrainian! What we should ask then is not whether conditions are better in Russia than in other countries but whether they are better than before the revolution.—E. SATCHELL (Auckland).

(Our correspondent's letter offers a sound excuse for the present confusion in Russia. It does not disprove our assertion that Russia looks on at Germany's advance into the Balkans because she is afraid, in her present state, to attempt to stop it. The fact, if it is a fact, that Hitler has a third of his entire army on the Russian frontier means (1) that he does not trust his neighbour, and (2) that it is a long way from the Baltic to the Black Sea. We have never suggested that six million soldiers spread across a continent could be watched by a few thousand frontier guards.—Ed.)

Sir,—Thousands of readers of *The Listener* will have read and heartily agreed with your article "Why Russian Looks On." The Dean of Canterbury's book *The Socialist Sixth of the World* shows that country up in a different light. If the Dean is telling the truth, then we with our great wealth on the one hand, and unemployment, poverty, slums and war on the other, should be the last to criticise a country which has eliminated these curses.—"TRUTH" (Rangiora).

## "MADRID" HYMN TUNE

Sir,—I have been keenly interested in two letters published in your issue. The first one, signed "B Natural," praised the hymn known as "Madrid," and mentioned that it was to be found in the Methodist Hymn Book. In your issue of February 7 another letter appeared signed "L. D. Austin," in which the beautiful tune of "Madrid" was utterly condemned. May I state that this writer is under the wrong impression, and is criticising the "Madrid" tune in the Presbyterian book, this tune being quite ordinary and the least interesting. I would like L. D.

Austin to try over the "Madrid" tune in the Methodist Hymn Book, and he will surely feel like apologising to "B Natural," because this particular hymn tune is certainly a beautiful setting, and if it were well played by any of our leading bands, it would, I am sure, be truly thrilling.—"B SHARP" (Ashburton).

## ART AND TRUTH

Sir,—Will you allow me to say through your columns that I am with "General Opinion," and would suggest that in future the cover picture be either Art or Truth, or both? We never tire of pictures of the many and various beauty spots of New Zealand. May we have some on the covers to come?

As I did not hear the broadcast talk, "The Spirit of England," by Noel Coward, and read it in a recent *Listener*, there is a paragraph which I would like you or your readers to explain. Noel Coward said: "If I speak of the English spirit I am just talking about the English people, but if I speak of the Spirit of England, I am talking of something infinitely greater than the sum of all English men and English women who have ever lived." How can there be anything greater than that?—A. S. MEW (Dunedin).

## BOOK OF THE YEAR.

Sir,—In his book talk the other night J. H. E. Schroder reviewed *Letters and Art in New Zealand*, by E. H. McCormick. As this was, for me, the review of the year on the book of the year, I hope you will find room to publish it in full.—T.A. (Wellington).

(We agree with our correspondent's estimates, but cannot find space for his request.—Ed.)

## BROADCAST ENGLISH

Sir,—I think John Doe (Auckland) is amiss in regard to the word "precedence," as it is now usually pronounced with the accent or stress on the first syllable, although both pronunciations are in order (see Concise Oxford Dictionary). English is a living language and the meaning and pronunciation are constantly changing; the spelling also. Suppose we do get some board to direct pronunciation of English who will direct the board? Before we can have a standard language we must have a standard spelling, as the want of this is the main cause of words being mispronounced.

Who can explain the vagaries of English spelling and pronunciation? The International Phonetic Alphabet would probably cause further confusion, but it is still possible to effect a great improvement in spelling by using the conventional and familiar symbols, with a very few additions, say, one each to A.E.G.I.O.R.S. To-day the spelling of English is more like mental gymnastics, and as to pronunciation, your guess is as good as mine, as there are no fixed rules.

St. Ledger becomes Sillinger, Saint John—Sin Jin, Beaulieu—Bewly, Portishead—Pozzet, Seven Oaks—Snoaks or Snooks, and going by this rule the American called Niagara Falls—Niffles.

The following was taken from the *English Daily Mail* some time ago—"English as she is Spoke":

*Abscond*—a greenish coloured drink, now illegal in France.

*Abide*—to purchase; as in the sentence "Abide a new hat, chic isn't it?"

*Acid*—to talk, to convey one's thoughts: "Acid to her, you're no lady! acid."

*Aim*—a refrained contraction of I am, as in "Aim awareless announcer."

*Censor*—a word frequently used by moralists thus: No censor right or wrong.

*Chest*—barely, only. Illustration: Chest a song at twilight.

*Hedge*—what a razor has; the dangerous part of a cliff.

*Plate*—a desperate condition; to be in a terrible plate.

*Waddle*—a contraction of "what will" as in the song, "Waddle I do?"

—"LAPSUS LINGUAE" (Te Awamutu).

## ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"Interested."—A Service secret.