

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

SEPTEMBER 5, 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.

Fighting Without Faith

IT will be a pity if any reader of this issue misses the remarkable talk on page 3 by Herbert Agar, editor of the *Courier Journal* (Louisville, U.S.A.). While it would be foolish to suggest that any talk is for everybody, it is safe enough to say that most Americans are worth listening to when their subject is victory over Hitler. And Mr. Agar's subject is more than victory over Hitler. It is victory over ourselves—over all the slackness, cowardice, selfishness, and laziness that have enabled Hitler to threaten the world. He of course does not charge us with these sins. He charges his own countrymen. But our complacency is very deep and very dangerous if his words pass over our heads.

Nor does he make the mistake of those untimely moralists who forget that to-day comes before to-morrow. Hitler has arrived. He is hammering at our door now. If he gets through we shall not merely be too late to put the house in order: we shall have no house at all—no shelter for democracy, no place for the free man to rest his head. As Mr. Agar himself puts it, "We shall descend into the long night which follows the death of every great civilisation." So it is the struggle itself that counts most at the present hour. We have to beat the Germans. Even to think of anything else is folly unless we are all the time thinking first of victory, and working for it.

But Mr. Agar's real point is that too many of us are fighting without faith. The war came because the democracies were sheltering behind "big words that were not associated with big deeds." It has gone against us so far largely because we were socially and politically sick when it started, and have not yet overcome our lassitude. We still shirk what Mr. Agar calls "the bold simple truth" that our democracy is largely "wind and promises." In other words our cynicism is fighting Hitler's fanaticism—and that will remain an unequal struggle until we are reinforced by faith.

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.

BLACK RECORD.

Sir,—In answer to "Audax II." and J. L. Johnson, I do not claim patriotism or heroism. I am merely a lover of peace and of leisure. The Germans have proved themselves barbarous without Sir Robert's help. But both "Audax" (I. and II.) and J. L. Johnson appear to wish to create the same atmosphere after this war as we had after the last, which led to rearmament of Germany and made this war possible. Preventing rearming will not cause war, as a nation without arms cannot fight, and notifying German workers to abandon munition factories before bombing them after the war, will not cause deaths of workers. This does not mean starving Germany, as there are plenty of goods for all.

—PAUL NICKLINSON (Hunua).

Sir,—Encore de l'audace. Audaxes plentiful but weak on the wing. Anyhow, they are not making much of a job of flying with their pen feathers. "Audax II." says it is very easy to answer the arguments of *Black Record*. Actually, there are no arguments. Merely a record of facts, well and truly proven. His first 20 lines result in Sir Robert being accused of drawing an absurd conclusion from a theory he never made. The next 16, where not definitely answered in advance in the preface of the book, refer to matters not even hinted at in the record. Liddell Hart's idea that the Nazis will fight harder because of *Black Record* is bunkum. Both Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden have left nothing in doubt about the character of the next treaty. Why waste good ink trying to blacken *Black Record*? The little brochure is safe behind the "aes triplex" of chapter and verse, as it was intended to be. The author would hardly be likely to put anything out that could be pulled to pieces by the Fourth Form at St. Percy's.

John Johnson's quip about my name amounting to an impenetrable disguise is the one bright spot in his otherwise disappointing and very angry letter. The British Empire is engaged in a modern crusade. If the Germans win, there will not be a holy place left in the world, not even in the mind of a school child. It is also claimed that the struggle is a working-man's war, and as a consequence the efficient working of the huge family of Smiths is one of the factors ensuring that there will always be an England. Nevertheless although Smith is thus a name to be proud of, it cannot compare in selectivity with illustrious monikers such as Cholmondeley, Montmorency, or Jack Johnson.

—E. A. W. SMITH (Christchurch).

NEW ZEALAND LITERATURE

Sir,—I have been working too hard for my living lately to be able to get up enough enthusiasm to answer Mr. Alexander's letter—digging and aesthetics not being always harmonious. But reading the able reply of Mr. Walsh has given me energy.

To leave Tolstoy, Shelley, and the others to their homes and tombs, let us remark the New Zealand literary scene. For a small and new country, we have produced a number of writers. But these, practically without exception until the appearance of Sargeson, Vogt, Curnow and a few others, wrote like tourists, as though they had no roots—they referred to Home—and the natural surroundings of New Zealand were exotic to them. In writing about New Zealand, they failed utterly: others writing to-day are finding the same cul-de-sac. The writing has been of New Zealand, the country, not New Zealand, the people.

To be able to write concerning New Zealand, the people, one must be of them. If that is so, and one has travelled, then it will be found that New Zealanders in all main points are identical with French,

English, Germans, and Eskimos, and that the differences will be of culture, heritage and environment. The trouble has been with New Zealand writers that they did not feel themselves to be New Zealanders, rather they were the exiled English. They will have to feel themselves of the New Zealand race, equipped with a background of New Zealand experience before being able to write sincerely of New Zealand, the people. And as long as the roots of our native writers wave in the air or wriggle into the foreign caves of English or American literary tradition, we will get no writing worthy of the name "great."—G. R. GILBERT (Auckland).

APPRECIATIVE LISTENERS

Sir,—Many thanks to those who give so much pleasure to this listener—in particular, to Major F. H. Lampen, for his delightful reminiscences. I am glad "The West Wind" did not carry him out of our ken. Thanks, too, to "Our Cavalier," who brings to us real music, and from the king of musical instruments, or rather it is that to me; not that stringed instruments do not give great pleasure; but having struggled with the piano for years, I give the palm to those who have mastered its wonders.—GOLDEN GORSE (Campbell's Bay).

WHOOPIING COUGH.

Sir,—As I read the article on "Whooping Cough" in *The Listener* I thought I had often heard lectures on the subject from experienced mothers and old grannies. (God bless them.) Most mothers are aware of the immediate danger of serious chest complaints developing, but it takes a learned doctor to ignore the more insidious nervous and psychological effects. Yet time and time again I have heard whooping cough blamed for the presence of flat-feet, fear of the dark, and other nervous complaints that the mothers declared were not present before the children had whooping cough. In one small district this disease was a byword owing to a complacent mother who when faced with any physical or moral unpleasantness in her daughter, would fold her hands and with a deprecating smile reply, "It's the whooping cough what done it!" But she and her daughter did not live in vain, for not a woman brought up in that district made light of whooping cough in their offspring.

I think Dr. Turbott could have stressed the danger of a long walk to and from school too soon after this sickness, and the danger to toddlers of being too much on their feet too soon. He made no mention of nervousness in various forms developing. As a mere woman I suggest that a fortnight's holiday with an unworried and work-free mother would work wonders in restoring the child's health and mental confidence, but while the cost of every reform and every disaster hits parents first, that is an impossible dream. —"MOTHER" (Green Island).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"OLD JACK" (Wellington) wants "a little more serious music at a time like this," and wonders how "any male calling himself a man" can "record such drivel" as we hear from Bing Crosby.

"NOT SATISFIED" (Dunedin) protests against "encroachment" on dance sessions, and thinks that "dance fans" since they pay as much for their *Listener* as followers of the classics, should get as much information in the programmes.

XXX (Christchurch) suggests that it would be "an immense convenience" to readers if the National programmes for each day of the week were printed on two facing pages—Sunday (National) then Sunday and Monday (Commercial), and so on—since most listeners confine themselves to one service or the other. (We are grateful for suggestions, but afraid of this one.—Ed.)

A.D.G. (Howick) is surprised that any one should object to the chimes of Big Ben which, with "the few bars of beautiful music that follow," and the prayers of millions of people joining in, carry the soul in supplication "right up to God."

"PRAVDA VITEZI" (Dunedin) feels that the period for silent prayer is too short, and should not be suddenly interrupted by the organ, and then by the latest figures of the National Savings account.

"THINKER" (Johnsonville) wants the *Internationale* after the National Anthem.