

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

DECEMBER 5, 1941

Report on England

ONE of the purposes of Mr. Duff Cooper's visit to the Dominion was to discover how we are reacting to the war. Another was to tell us how Britain is reacting; and if there has been nothing else to learn or tell the visit would still have been important. But as it happens, everything that Mr. Duff Cooper told us has been corroborated and amplified by the remarkable book, *Report on England*, which reached New Zealand while Mr. Duff Cooper was still here. It is not necessary to say more about this report than we say about it on Pages 6 and 7 of this issue—unless perhaps this: that it was written by an American who neither believed nor disbelieved when he left home that Britain was saving civilisation but who returned to New York convinced that tyranny had for ever missed its chance.

It missed its chance because Britain, and Britain alone at that time stood across its path. When the battle of Britain began Britain had fighting planes — not enough, not nearly enough; but the best in the world just then, and the best pilots in the world to man them. It had bombers—so few that it makes us shudder to-day to think of them; an army, but so small by comparison with Germany's, and so ill-equipped, that Germany had good reason to despise it; a navy, the best in the world in fighting efficiency; but so dangerously dispersed after the fall of France that it could nowhere put to sea without risk. Those things stood between Hitler and victory, and nothing else at all but British courage. But it was sufficient. The first battle of Britain was lost. Time was won for further preparation. Britain still stands, and now stands prepared—we can't say it too often or recall it too often—because what Mr. Duff Cooper told us last week was true; *no one, rich or poor or old or young, thought of surrender.*

That is something that will seem more glorious to our children than it does to us, since it is not easy to recognise big events when they are happening. But if it seems amazing to our children as well as glorious, that will be because they are farther away then we are from what Karel Capek calls the moral cliffs of Dover. For if the tribute of the American editor will warm British blood, the tribute of the Czech playwright printed on Page 12 will remind lovers of liberty all over the world that "the shores of England begin wherever the values of liberty find application."

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.

MUSIC WITHOUT WORDS

Sir,—Two correspondents have recently voiced complaints about what they call the "annoying interruptions" by a commentator during broadcasts of complete operas. These disgruntled persons have evidently overlooked the point that an opera, besides being a performance of music, is a stage spectacle. The ideal radio presentation of opera would be, of course, through the medium of television. Listeners would then witness the stage action as well as they would hear the music. But that devoutly-to-be-wished consummation is still an unrealised dream in New Zealand. So we do the next best thing; we follow the practice adopted in broadcasting race meetings, football matches, boxing, and wrestling encounters — every kind of activity, in short, which is of public interest, and which depends upon an eye-witness at the microphone to convey an adequate description, to listeners: we make use of what is called the running commentary in order that listeners can be apprised of the happenings on the stage. They can hear the singing, true; but almost invariably this is in a foreign tongue and gives no clue to the development of the plot. The commentator, from his imaginary seat in the fanciful theatre, tells us what the actors are doing and thinking. The latter feat is made possible because operatic singers usually think aloud in recitative. Incidentally, the recitative is frequently a bore, even to ardent opera fans; therefore, if it be sometimes replaced by—in the case of Wagner—a "Ring"-side description, so much the better for listeners.

However, Mr. Editor, the *Music from the Theatre* sessions, embodying these annotated broadcasts, were inaugurated by the NBS in response to numerous requests, and have proved an extremely popular feature. Your two dissenting correspondents, sir, are in a hopeless minority.—"THE WRITER OF THE INTERRUPTIONS" (Wellington).

JOKES IN THE BIBLE.

Sir,—May I be permitted in a few words to answer "Boswell (failed B.A.)" on the subject of his letter, which had nothing to do with "Jokes in the Bible." In most books on logic there is found an account of the false reasoning—*argumentum ad hominem*—attacking the person when unable to attack his argument. My letter was sent in on the basis of the principle that "the object of argument is not victory but progress." Moreover, I feel that if one gives an opinion it should be worth the subscription of one's name, not a pseudonym. On the same grounds one should state any small justification one has for giving such opinion.

CHRISTMAS ISSUE NEXT WEEK

FOR the benefit of readers overseas our Christmas issue will appear next week and NOT during Christmas week.

It will be a special issue, with a particularly interesting portrait supplement honouring Her Majesty the Queen.

But it will be a limited issue. Paper is so precious these days that none can be risked on numbers that may not be sold.

Be an early buyer if you would avoid disappointment.

If I misquoted Pope I apologise to "Boswell (failed B.A.)", as my purpose was to discuss Hebrew not English poetry. However I shall be more careful in future.

"Oliver's" letter, like my own, was intended to give an honest opinion to which we both are equally entitled. "Boswell's" letter is but a nasty adolescent attempt to be clever at the expense of those who, unlike himself, do not put themselves out of reach by adopting pseudonyms.

Lastly an address at Gore does not imply life-long residence. "Boswell's" remarks recall the story of the wasp which, hatched in the carcase of a horse, boasted to its fellows of its strength and endurance. The tone of his letter indicates that his form of culture should be spelt "Kultur."

GILBERT J. JOHNSTON (Gore).

Sir,—Your correspondent Gilbert J. Johnston, B.A., thinks he can detect a "twist" in my name. By the same rule his name must be "Gilbertian." People in glass houses, etc.! He sneers at knowledge gained from cheap reprints, but is there a cheaper reprint than the Bible? He does not tell us who wrote the book of Job, simply because he does not know. Job is anonymous, but any Bible student must realise that it is not written in the Hebrew tradition, but is the result of contact with Persian and Greek cultures. The Jews were under the Persian rule for two hundred years and thus came under the influence of the disciples of Zoroaster, the great monotheistic teacher, very particularly in the doctrines of eschatology. The Hebrews did not believe in the universality of God; they believed in Jahveh, the God of the Hebrews. Judaism was born about the time of Ezra and the Jews became monotheists in earnest, and the real period of priests, ceremony, and ritual begins. The Bible is a book of many periods and the redactors have named the books to suit themselves, and place them in position for purposes of their own. A prominent example is the book of Deuteronomy.

"OLIVER" Te Awamutu.

Sir,—In a recent issue of *The Listener* the writer of "Jokes in the Bible" stated inter alia: "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." About the same date I read this in a book by Philip MacDonald: "Pope would never have been such a fool as to say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing: knowledge is always useful—learning isn't until you've got plenty." According to W. J. Locke another common error is "at sixes and sevens." He says the singular number is correct.

REMUERA (Auckland).

(We have no further space for this correspondence.—Ed.)

POINTS FROM LETTERS

EL JARDINERO (Seacliff) says that the Broadcasting Service, "after paying tributes to the U.S.A., France, Norway and Poland" should do something for "our ally the U.S.S.R."

M. E. PEELE (Waihou), J. G. Haddow (Auckland), and two or three correspondents offer further comment on Mrs. Davidson's letter complaining of inaccurate English on the air. Most quote Fowler against Mrs. Davidson, but J. G. Haddow discusses the difficulty presented by compound plurals, while M. E. Peele adds some extracts from William Barclay, M.A., and ends with this quotation from Carlyle: "No mortal but is narrow enough to delight in educating others into counterparts of himself."

ERNEST FAIRBURN (Whangarei) claims, on the authority of *L'Etude*, that the largest organ in the world is in Convention Hall, Atlantic City, and that it has seven manuals, 933 stops, and 32,913 pipes.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"IOLANTHE" (Christchurch): (1) Because most people at dinner listen without wishing to know what they are listening to. (2) Because we need the space for other more important announcements.

MADELINE LAWFOORD SMITH (Gisborne): We do not undertake to print or acknowledge all the letters we receive, and we announce in every issue that we cannot give reasons why any letter is not printed.—Ed.