

LISTENER

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Art and War

IT would be ridiculous to pretend that the exhibition of war pictures opened last week in Wellington (and noticed at greater length on Page 10) has meaning for everybody. There are people to whom pictures (other than photographs) mean nothing; who are blind both to colour and to form; and who would be better employed reading about war than looking at it through the eyes of the most dramatic draughtsman alive. The truth is in fact more selective than that. It would probably be safe to say that the number of people in any community who can read what an artists draws or paints is one in five or six, and in a young community like our own one in nine or ten. But that still leaves a very large number who can be earnestly advised to see good pictures as often as they can.

And the pictures at present on exhibition in Wellington are as good in their class as New Zealand has ever seen. They are of course creations of the hour, and in fifty or even twenty-five years may have fallen back among the things whose interest is largely historical. But they will interest us as long as the present war interests us, and in the meantime are as vivid a picture of it as talent, and training, and courage, and deep feeling can make them. For they are not the result primarily of orders or commissions. They are not things that men, employed to make pictures as carpenters are employed to build houses, went out and brought back. They are things that men and women, stirred to their depths by the horror and grandeur of total war, felt first and expressed afterwards.

In addition they are things that our own generation, our own fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters have felt, and are still feeling. It is our war, our struggle, our resistance, and—let us not be too squeamish to say it—our courage and self-sacrifice that have been given colour and shape. Many of the exhibits are the work of men (like our own two New Zealanders) who are members of the fighting forces. The others are the work of men and women associated with the fighting forces as helpers, relatives, or friends. Perhaps therefore we should not call them an "exhibition" at all, but borrow the Prime Minister's words from the catalogue and call them the expression of our faith and of our strength.

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.

IN INDIA NOW

Sir,—After reading your leading article on non-violence in India under Gandhi, I must say I found it interesting to turn over a few pages of the same issue and discover a review of the film *The Great Commandment*, which deals with the triumph of the very same doctrine of non-violence when applied by the early Christians to their Roman conquerors. Your leading article takes it for granted that non-violence would have absolutely no chance against Germany or Japan, and you assert that it only succeeded as far as it did in India because we British are so humane. Yet, as your film critic hinted, as the film itself makes clear, and as I am sure you could prove from history, old Roman rule could be just as tough and brutal as the modern Axis brand. And yet it is a fact that the early Christians, with their non-violence, converted their conquerors. It took time, I admit, but they did it.

Indeed, sir, aren't we all a little too prone to assume that there never has been a tyranny equal in depth to that of the Axis (you notice I say depth and not extent)? And aren't we also sometimes too ready with the self-righteous assumption that only the British are capable of humanity? We think that non-violence would fail against Germany or Japan (and may have pretty good reasons for thinking it);

but we don't know; and so I, for one, believe the human race should be thankful that, although Gandhi has temporarily given up his major experiment, he hasn't closed his whole laboratory.

Finally, sir, if we British have become so humane in India, don't you think that the fact that we have been opposed by non-violent methods may have had something to do with it?

REMEMBER AMRITSAR! (Wellington).

QUIET WEDDING

Sir,—Your notice of the film *Quiet Wedding* was worthy of the picture, one couldn't say more. As one who has long thought that lavish let-'em-all-come weddings tend to be an expense of spirit in a waste of vulgarity touched by indecency, I rejoiced in the social satire of the picture as much as I laughed at its comedy. The over-laying of the ceremony by social egotism and display has never been better described. I would make one criticism. Can we not have a close season for comic vicars? The parson in *Quiet Wedding* is worse than the worst literary cliché. And while a clergyman will go through the marriage service privately with the parties beforehand, and probably be glad to improve the occasion, would any clergyman allow a public rehearsal in his church in the manner of the one in this picture? Perhaps (I am not a Greek scholar) this is what Aristotle meant when he said tragedy made men better than they are, but comedy made them worse.

A.M. (Wellington).

LAST MINUTE PROGRAMME CHANGES

Sir,—If there is one thing more irritating to the regular listener than anything else connected with broadcasting it is the frequent disappointments that occur when too much reliance is placed on programme details published in *The Listener*. I refer specifically to the details given in the current issue of the broadcasts scheduled for to-day (Sunday, February 1), of Junior Farrell, boy pianist; and Dan Foley, Irish tenor, at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. respectively.

Now I know *The Listener* goes to press some days before the programmes are broadcast; and that last minute alterations naturally cannot be published. But why cannot the station make some reference to the alteration instead of ignoring the matter altogether? If a session cannot be broadcast at the advertised time, it is surely a small courtesy to acquaint those who have tuned in specially to hear it, of the fact that the session cannot be broadcast, and to tell listeners when it will be on the air.

Your paper announces that "any last minute alterations will be announced over the air," how about endeavouring to have this put into practice? Anyway, why didn't Junior Farrell and Dan Foley appear as scheduled?

P.J.K. (Dunedin).

(The Commercial Broadcasting Service states that it had originally been intended to start both Junior Farrell at the *Piano* and *Glimpses of Erin*, featuring Dan Foley, from all ZB stations on the same date, Sunday, February 1. Too late for notification in *The Listener*, it was found necessary to alter this arrangement. Junior Farrell started from 2ZB on Sunday, February 1, and from 1ZB on February 8; he starts from 3ZB on February 15, 4ZB on February 22, and 2ZA, Palmerston North, on March 1. *Glimpses of Erin* started from 2ZB on February 1 and will start from 1ZB on February 15, 3ZB, March 1, 4ZB, March 15, and from 2ZA on March 29. The question of announcing last minute changes of programmes from the station itself has been drawn to the attention of 4ZB.

PHILIPPINE TIMBER

Sir,—If your paragraph on page 5 of your issue of January 23 correctly reports what the speaker said about the Philippines, he has, I think, made a mistake about *Lignum Vitae*. This tree grows chiefly in the West Indies, and I would be surprised to know that it is found growing naturally in the Philippines. Nor do I think that it is the hardest of all woods. It is certainly very hard, but not so hard, I imagine, as some of the woods grown in Australia.

TIMBER (Wellington).

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

By WHIM-WHAM

[The Mexican newspaper "Excelsior," declares that the Mexican Intelligence Department has confirmed the existence of a group of female Axis spies, known as the "Mata Hari Corps," who have become close friends of high Government officials through exercising their charms.—Cable news item.]

O what can ail thee, High Official,
Disgraced and under close Arrest?
The Game is up, the Plot is foiled,
And All's confess'd.

I met a Lady at a Ball
Among the Diplomatic Corps;
She said she was the Niece of some
Ambassador.

Not Garbo equalled her in Charm,
In Form and Feature, Wave and Curl—
She was what I believe they call
A Glamour Girl.

I took her to my Office, nor
Imagined Anything was wrong—
Though now and then she'd softly hum
Horst Wessel's Song.

She gave me Kisses while she sneaked
State Documents; all unawares,
I entertained her with my Views
On World Affairs.

Ah, then I heard a Hue and Cry
For Secrets, out and Papers missed,
And missing with them my superb
Fifth Columnist.

And that is why I languish here,
Disgraced, and under close Arrest.
The Beans are spilled, the Bird has flown,
And All's confess'd.