

LISTENER

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Will The Americans Go Home Again?

AFTER the Great War, as everybody knows, the Americans turned their backs on Europe. They went home, and they stayed home, and one of the consequences was a second world war greater than the first. Will they do the same thing again?

Nobody knows. But if we may base an opinion on what Americans are thinking at present, they will *not* make that mistake a second time. *Fortune* last month made a survey of public opinion on this very question, and what *Fortune* discovers to-day most barometers of United States opinion are showing to-morrow. *Fortune* discovered that more than eighty per cent. of the people it cross-questioned want a United States peace, and that more than sixty per cent. accept all the implications of such a peace. In other words victory over the Axis is not enough. There must also be victory over the influences that make aggression possible, and that will be impossible without American participation. It will also of course be impossible without the participation of all the other peace-loving Powers, and it is interesting to note that only 76 per cent. voted for an attempt by America alone to organise the world for peace.

The survey covered seven issues, and some of the results were a little surprising:

Return to national isolation	11.1%
Unify but isolate the hemisphere	6.9%
Try alone to organise world for peace	26.2%
Form a new world peace league	34.3%
Establish ties with British Empire	3.5%
Unite with all democracies (Union now)	8.4%
Don't know	9.6%

It is not surprising that only 3.5 per cent. wanted union with the British Empire, since no one has ever suggested or believed that opinion—on one side of the Atlantic or the other—has reached that point. But it is surprising that a movement which has been pushed so hard as "Union Now" has been—a combination, that is, of all the democracies—received only 8.4 per cent. of the votes cast, and that only 9.6 per cent. had no policy at all. It is not so surprising, and most people will think it distinctly encouraging, that the largest group in favour of an active participation in the post-war settlement was described by *Fortune* as the best informed.

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.

CAPTURE OF QUEBEC.

Sir,—I listened recently to an interesting dramatisation of Wolfe's capture of Quebec. It is a pity that the producers of such pieces would not make quite sure of the historical details. To finish by saying that the "Union Jack has been run up in place of the Tricolour" (or words to that effect) is to ante-date both flags. The French at that time probably fought under the white banner of the Bourbons, as the Tricolour was a product of the Revolution; and the Union Jack (which I believe was also mentioned) dates from the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and so could scarcely be used in the Eighteenth.

A.C.B. (Wanganui).

A QUOTATION.

Sir,—May I be permitted to draw attention to a misquotation which appeared in a recent issue of *The Listener*? Your correspondent, E. M. Perry, quoted a verse from one of Rudyard Kipling's poems as follows:

*"It's Tommy this and Tommy that
And Tommy go away.
But it's Thank you Mr. Atkins,
When the guns begin to play."*

Now, it is many years since I read *Barrack Room Ballads*, but unless I am much mistaken the last line should read:

"When the band begins to play."

Mr. Perry evidently got mixed up with another verse which reads:

*"It's Tommy this and Tommy that
And chuck him out the brute,
But it's Thin red line of 'eroes
When the gun begins to shoot."*

W.H.M. (Wharehine).

"CURE FOR WORLD'S ILLS."

Sir,—H. H. Fountain states that "Christianity alone has the remedy for the ills of the world, and that nothing else has." If such is the case, why do we not have this remedy after about 2000 years of Christianity? The fact is that Christianity as given by the Founder was not intended for the ills of this world, or any other world, but was to enable certain persons to flee from the wrath to come, and make safe provision for the future world. Did Christ not say "My Kingdom is not of this world"? That was the original belief of Christians; Christ was returning soon to take the prepared persons away from this world. But when Christ did not return, the original Christians gave up Christianity. Then it became a Gentile religion, absorbed a good deal of "paganism" and the Church settled down to creed-making, and the multiplication of many brands of Christianity.

OLIVER (Te Awamutu).

(Several other correspondents have written on this subject, some supporting, other opposing H. H. Fountain, but we cannot find room for their letters.—Ed.)

MUSIC AND THE PASSIONS

Sir,—It is annoying to read so many letters published in *The Listener* condemning modern music and recommending that it would not be broadcast. Your correspondents L. D. Austin and H. E. Gunter would no doubt wish all present-day composers to lay down their pens and cease composition. They would do well to remember that without creative effort there can be no progress, and whatever their reactions to modern music, their opinions should not be thrust down other people's throats. There is no reason to suppose that music composed to-day is in any degree inferior to that of any other epoch. The general standard is probably considerably

higher, and there are composers alive to-day (e.g. Sibelius, Vaughan Williams), who, in years to come, will be considered as great as the giants of the past. When Ireland's "Concertino Pastorale" for strings was broadcast from 1YA a few weeks ago, I thought it one of the best modern orchestral works I had heard.

I don't see how music can appeal to the passion. It may possibly in conjunction with some other art, but not by itself. A sensible opinion can hardly be formed by an amateur on a modern work after one hearing only, and I would recommend Mr. Gunter to listen to the "Concertino Pastorale" a dozen more times, if he has the courage, before passing judgment on it again. And why all the fuss about Busoni's technical achievements? They are of no interest to the public to-day, unless he made recordings, which I very much doubt, nor, for that matter, are Liszt's. What does interest us is the quality of their compositions.

And before I close, I should like to express my appreciation of the standard of performance, and also of the music performed by the 1YA Studio Orchestra under the conductorship of Thomas Matthews. My only criticism of the choice of music is that there are not sufficient modern works played that have not been recorded. I enjoyed very much "Quiet City," by Copland, heard last week, and should like to hear it again in the near future, as well as some more "miserable modern stuff," if this is practicable.

And one small complaint about your otherwise excellent paper. Is it not possible to publish the items performed by singers in the symphonic and chamber programmes from the subsidiary stations, instead of just their names? Pianists, violinists and other soloists all have their items published, so why not singers?

E. W. THOMPSON (Auckland).

THE CRACK IN BIG BEN.

Sir,—The readiness with which an obviously ridiculous rumour is accepted by many is well illustrated by the oft repeated statement that "Big Ben" is cracked.

The other day, for example, I found this in the *Argentine Magazine*: "Britain's most celebrated bell, Big Ben, whose note is carried all over the world by wireless, is cracked; the sound we hear is not its full volume, but is made by a lighter clapper striking the sound side of it."

This absurd rumour is seventy years old. The hour bell we hear is really "Big Ben" the second. The first "Big Ben," weighing 13 tons 11 cwt. was cast in 1858, but cracked before leaving the foundry. A second hour bell of the same size was cast, and this also cracked, and until repairs could be made, the hours were struck on the largest of the quartet bells. While it remained cracked it was useless, like the 190-year-old American "Liberty Bell" which cracked 117 years ago, and has not been repaired. But "Big Ben" the second was repaired and again brought into use and our ears tell us that it is now a "true" bell.

The "fate of nations" is not affected by this rumour, but it helps to prove what nonsense people will believe. The pleasure derived from a peal by bells is due to the fact that each "true" bell has five distinct notes, four of them overtones, the octave, quint, tierce, and kum. The first three sounding simultaneously give the consonant or key note of the bell. At 9 p.m. the greatest moment of the day, when "Big Ben" speaks, each tone can be heard distinctly, and the Kum-m-m makes a fitting ending to Dean Farrar's words, set to the music of "Big Ben's" side mates, the quarter chimes:

*"Lord, thro' this hour
Be Thou my Guide,
So by Thy power
No foot shall slide."*

ROB (Ahipara).