

LISTENER

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Army Leadership

A CABLE message last week announced a new method of selecting army officers on the day on which a devastating attack on the old method arrived by post in a book*. It was what we might call a strange coincidence. But it was a stranger coincidence that cable and book were both funny. The cable was funny because it included psycho-analysis and tight rope walking among army tests of leadership. The book was funny because it told what an irreverent Australian saw, thought, and endured in a British regiment between July, 1940, and January, 1942. Of course the fun in both cases was incidental. It is profoundly important that the army should find better officers, and if psychiatry and obstacle races will help to find them their use in such a place is no more ludicrous than shorts must have seemed the first day they appeared on the parade ground. So with the Australian's book. It is uproarious reading because learning to be a soldier can be an uproarious experience. But it is very important reading whether it makes us laugh or cry. It is an attempt to laugh the army out of its gravest weaknesses—emphasis on the wrong facts, cultivation of the least useful techniques. It is therefore deliberately irreverent and more than deliberately provocative. It rings all the changes between simple exaggeration and hilarious clowning. But even the final satirical sentence, "We will win the war if we are not careful", is simply the author's method of blowing the trumpet, banging the drum, and arousing us to "a vision, aiming high, of the new England, new Europe, new world" our army, navy, and air force are trying to make.

*Bless 'Em All. Written from inside knowledge by "Boomerang," Secker and Warburg, London.

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 Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published.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.

HEARD ON THE AIR

Sir,—Here are a few mispronunciations from different stations recently. Unfortunately they influence the young and the ignorant.

"Beethoven" with the second syllable almost non-existent.

"Amáryllis" (accented on second syllable instead of third).

"Beetrice" Harrison.

"Laugh and the world laughs with you" given an absurdly strong accent on the "you" instead of the "with" as demanded by the sense and the rhythm.

"Anthony" wrongly pronounced with a "th" instead of a "t."

"Hypattier" for Hypatia.

Why not announce with a business-like straight-forwardness of diction, instead of the absurd, artificial, self-conscious lilt that is so common and so irritating?

PLAIN BILL (Invercargill).

CATHOLICS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

Sir,—Good secular newspapers always avoid taking sides in the dispute between the Roman Church and the English Church by saying *Roman Catholic* when they mean *Roman Catholic*. But *The Listener*, except in the programmes, light-heartedly dismisses the claims of the Anglican Church by making the word "Catholic" equivalent to "Roman Catholic." I hope it will be for the future as accurate in this respect as I find it in every other.

R. P. TAYLOR (Kumara).

[Good secular newspapers call churches by the names by which the adherents of those churches call them, not by the names by which adherents of rival churches may wish to have them called.—Ed.]

E. F. HISCOCKS

Sir,—Many months ago there appeared in *The Listener* an article dealing with cartoonists, in which it was stated that E. F. Hiscocks had gone to America. Previous to that a correspondent of mine had written, telling me of having met him in London, so I forwarded the article, and in response my correspondent (a fireman) now writes:

"Hiscocks is a full-time rescue-party man. I met him at a fire, dragging at debris, to rescue the quick and the dead. Considering that he is over sixty and quite unused to manual labour, I think it mighty plucky of him. The driver of the big travelling crane on the job, who in civil life is an accountant, is also a New Zealand man. His name is Sexton and he comes from Dunedin. Both Hiscocks and Sexton are returning to New Zealand when the war is over. Hiscocks has been in England for some years, and ever since the war started has been a rescue and demolition man—one of the rottenest jobs in Civil Defence, and the worst paid. A man of his age is definitely entitled to a pat on the back for doing

such a job. I showed him the cutting from *The Listener* and he laughed. Then we drank respect to J. Liddell Kelly, whom Hiscocks knew, in a pub which J.L.K., as a poet, would have loved—the Cheshire Cheese."

The Listener writer may have been correct in his statement. What my correspondent says does not prove that Hiscocks did not go to America, and the fact that Hiscocks laughed at the statement does not say "Yes" or "No." The fact that he is now in London, doing a tough job of war work, is passed on for the benefit of Wellington people whose memories go back to the days when the 1914 War was a thing undreamed of.

CHAS. S. KELLY (Stratford).

AFTER THE WAR

Sir,—Apropos the various expressions of opinion regarding the state of the World after the war, which were published in this week's *Listener*, it was noticeable that only once was reference to God made in these expressions.

While it is most interesting to know what a professor, a labour leader, an economist and a commercial man thinks on the subject, I venture to predict that not one of us will have any say in the re-shaping of the new world nor the conduct of its affairs until we learn to listen for the still small voice of God. He is the sole arbiter, the architect of future affairs. And until such time as we know real humility, until we go into the valley of Despair, as indeed we are destined to do, to emerge cleansed and purged of all the sickening artificialities which clothe our daily life, actions and utterances, then only shall we be guided aright, then only shall we know true greatness and everlasting peace.

PATRICK BELL-SYER (Wellington).

"COUNTY" AND "SHIRE"

Sir,—I can see that the writer of "Things to Come" is quite capable of looking after himself, but one just wonders of "Jonaitch" should not read "Jona-itch." Personally I like "Things to Come" and a paragraph entitled "From Shire to Shire" with the remark "Shire; a much more historic and Robin Hoodish word than County," sent me to an old book called *On the Study of Words*, by Richard Chenevise Trench, and he gives this interesting information: "Shire is connected with shear, share, and is properly a portion sheared or shorn off. When a Saxon King would create an earl . . . a share or shire was assigned him to govern, which also gave him his title. But at the conquest this Saxon officer was displaced by a Norman, the earl by the count. . . . In that singular and inexplicable fortune of words, which causes some to disappear and die out under the circumstances most favourable for life. . . . Count has disappeared from the title of the English nobility, while earl has recovered its place; although in evidence of the essential identity of the two titles, the wife of the earl is entitled a countess . . . and the two names shire and county equally survive." I am aware that the Oxford Dictionary denies that Shire has anything to do with shear or share, but I prefer to accept Trench.

OLIVER (Te Awamutu).



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