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Fifth War Christmas

IT would be rash to say that Saturday will be the most amazing Christmas New Zealand has ever experienced. Superlatives are always rash. But there can be few among us who do not feel the strangeness of celebrating Christmas in the situation in which the world finds itself this week. It is not merely that our own country is at war. The countries not at war are so few, and relatively so unimportant, that it is not an exaggeration to say that the whole globe is on fire. It is quite likely, as we write these lines, that one New Zealand division is fighting in the snow of the Apennines and another in the steaming jungle of the tropics. It is beyond question that friends and allies are fighting in those places, and in other places as oddly contrasted—river valleys in Burma, walled cities in China, frozen steppes in Russia; fighting in the sea and in the air; fighting all night and fighting all day; occupying deserts; holding mountain tops; patrolling the Arctic; ferrying men and guns and supplies over the very top of the world in Tibet. Nor is this just a temporary madness—a week or two of lunacy that will end as suddenly as it began. It is a frenzy that has lasted for fifty-one months, and it follows a plan. The war is *not* sheer madness. It is calculated (and still calculating) evil—an attempt by one half of mankind to conquer and control the other half, and the struggle of the other half to free itself. Freedom is being achieved. It will be completely achieved on one side of the world before Christmas comes again. But to rejoice in the meantime calls for some hardihood. It is possible, it is desirable, but it is certainly not easy—for those even whose faith it is that "in His will is our peace."

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

BUTTER WITH JUSTICE

Sir,—So Bert the carpenter is troubled in case the farmers get ahead of him with the butter ration. I don't think he need worry. I have just been staying for a week or two on a sheep farm. The owner, a veteran of the last war, had just finished two years' service in an Army job within New Zealand. During his absence from home, his wife managed the place. His son is still a schoolboy—the daughters are land-girls. Everyone was off to work about the place before eight in the morning, except when mustering was in progress, and then breakfast was at 2.0 a.m., with lunches cut and other preparations made the night before. They had one house cow, which supplied milk for the household, and they bought their butter, so had the half-pound ration like everybody else. Each person's ration was kept on a separate dish, and when a cake was to be made, a little was taken off each portion, so as to be fair all round. That surely is as democratic as it could be.

RUFUS (Wellington).

TO ALL READERS

OUR next issue (dated December 31), will contain programmes for eight days—from January 3 to January 10 inclusive. So don't light the fire with it after seven days (if you are sometimes guilty of such irreverence in normal times). These times are not normal. We can't guarantee that there will be no delivery delays over the holiday period, and we are giving you one day in hand as a precaution. Don't forget this and then write to us afterwards saying that you should have been warned. We warn you now.

TOO FAST

Sir,—Would it be possible to slow down some of the main station lecturers. Many of them speak far too fast—like a nervous young preacher reading his first sermon. Some of the science talks from Auckland have had this failing. They have been read or spoken so fast that it has been impossible to follow them intelligently. I recently listened to a talk on penguins, in which the lecturer rattled on at the "rate of ninety." When it is arranged for any speaker to broadcast, I suggest that he be given these instructions: "Come prepared to speak quietly, slowly and deliberately. Give your hearers time to listen, remembering that reception conditions are not always perfect all over the island. Try to help them by varying the tone of voice to suit the script. Do not race along trying to beat the clock."

"SLOW BUT SURE" (Wairoa).

MUSIC IN DUNEDIN

Sir,—Your correspondent "Pedals," would be interested to see the appreciative audiences (mostly young people), who attend Dr. Galway's Dunedin Town Hall organ recitals. This is in spite of the fact that classics like "My Baby Just Cares for Me" are not played. But each of the varied programmes contains at least one item of interest for everyone. To me, personally, these recitals have shown up a new world of musical delight.—"DULCIANA" (Dunedin).

PLANTING BY THE MOON

Sir,—The two letters in indignant rebuttal of "Simple Simon's" gentle and semi-whimsical lampooning of peculiar beliefs such as sowing by the moon and the destiny of the Jews, provide the interested bystander with almost perfect illustrations of newspaper controversy at its most illogical and futile level. Emotional extravagances of indignation are no substitute for the persuasions of logic and common sense seasoned with a little humour when necessary. To attack a man's character and cast ill-mannered aspersions on his cultural upbringing may provide the bystander with amusement, but contributes hardly anything more helpful to the discussion or the cause of truth. "Simple Simon" at least gives some indication as to his reasons for believing that the theory in question is untenable; H. E. Lawrence works himself up into an hysteria of acidulous verbiage, but does not bring forward a shred of evidence to show that his particular point of view has either logic or scientific credentials to commend it. Some readers of *The Listener* no doubt are genuinely interested in the pros and cons of the subject. Let us have facts and scientific data (if such be available); and sweet reasonableness, instead of asperities; if someone differs from us, forbid that we should dub his opinion "ignorant prejudice" while arrogating to ourselves by implication the lordly title of Sir Oracle. Last year I listened to a horticultural lecturer who finished his education with some years at Kew Gardens, England. Presumably, his words would be something more than ignorant prejudice! He affirmed that after 600 experiments carried out to test the hypothesis under consideration; that is, the influence of the moon on germination and growth, no data could be adduced either way to support a decisive verdict. That lecturer may conceivably have been mistaken; but his verdict had Kew Gardens behind it as an authority.

L. GORDON HANNA (Eltham).

RACE HISTORY

Sir,—I always find articles by A.M.R. interesting, and "What To Do with the Japanese?" was no exception. But I was startled by his surprise at a young Japanese professor identifying himself with a character from the Middle Ages. He concludes the paragraph by saying: "It means that all that world—so fantastic to us—of 'honour,' mortal combat, and derring-do is still the thought atmosphere of Japanese who sweat in steel-yards or fire torpedoes."

Do not all races with any history identify themselves with their ancestors, and are not those the strongest and longest abiding that knit the threads of the future, the present, and the past together? Is the fabric weakened as much by omitting the past as by omitting the present?—A STRAND (Dunedin).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Awake" and "Health Fiend": Sufficiently ventilated at present.

"Argosy": Perhaps 50 years hence.

"Jeannie": We don't know, but she has had sufficient praise for a week or two.

F.E.B. (Auckland): Points appreciated, but you are in a very small minority.