

# "The Slow Years Pass"

THE Memorial Park at Hamilton is on the bank of the Waikato River. Every tree in the park has a metal plate with the name of a serviceman who died in the wars. And here, at the turn of the year—when the last leaves are drifting to the ground—is held the Anzac Day Memorial Service.

These things were remembered by the Wellington poet Ruth Gilbert (Mrs. J. B. Mackay) when she was invited by the NZBS to write a sequence of poems for Anzac Day. As a child she had attended the services in Hamilton, often when they were taken by her father, the Rev. H. G. Gilbert, who had been a padre in France during World War I. When Mrs. Mackay thought about her subject she began to see how these early impressions could become its background. And so—slowly, and by no means easily—the poems were written. *The Slow Years Pass* became the title of a work which will be broadcast from 1YC, 2YC, 3YC and 4YA on the evening of Anzac Day.

There are nine poems. "You That Sit Down With Grief" is introductory, reminding us that love and grief are inseparable, and that throughout history they have been tested and sharpened in war. "There is a City Beautiful With Trees" explains the idea of the Memorial Park.

"Not sapless stone," wise-hearted elders said,  
"But living trees, bright hosts of wind and sun,  
Shall guard the memory of these young dead  
Whose only season was a winter one."

In the third poem the rhythm quickens to express the moods of childhood. A young girl, playing light-heartedly in "the place of grief," is brought to a pause by the fancy

That softly, as soft winds came  
Each tree in love and sorrow  
Whispered a dead boy's name.

This leads in the fourth poem to a consideration of those who mourn; and here, too, the imagery of the trees comes naturally into the theme. The symbolism of autumn, suggested earlier, reaches its full and clear statement in the fifth poem:

Now every tree, remembering its dead,  
Is fully robed and rightly garlanded.

The setting has been prepared for an Anzac Day Service, and the next poem opens with a line which peoples the scene:

These trees and flowers, this hushed  
and solemn crowd

The argument now passes to a mother, standing among those who remember and mourn. She thinks of her son, lost in young manhood, and sees him again in vigorous youth. Also in the crowd is a man who remembers his friend; and for him (in the seventh poem) the wind in the trees becomes the sound of the sea:

And I think once more upon those  
Who went down to the sea in ships,  
And the trees are loud, and a taste  
Like salt is on my lips.

Grief may have its source in distant years, or it may be sharp with recent loss. In the eighth poem the theme is

taken up by a girl who mourns a lover lost in Korea. There is no name for him yet in the park.

I have no tree for you so lately dead  
Save in my heart, where, grieving branches spread,  
The tree of sorrow cleaves the sunless air.

In this way, against the background of trees in autumn—the leaves symbolising, in their gentler fall, the passing of the young men—the poems bring together the thoughts and feelings of sacrifice which are shared by the silent crowd, and beyond it by the nation, and indeed by all peoples that have known war. The pain is softened by the rustling of trees, a threnody heard in most of the poems, suggesting always that the mourners shall be comforted. And in the last stanza of the final poem comes an affirmation of hope:

"Earth to its earth again,"  
Said the bugle, "and who shall save it?"  
"But the spirit," Heart comforted,  
"Back to the God who gave it."

## Other Special Programmes

A NEW NZBS programme which will have its first broadcast on Anzac Day—from 2YA at 8.15 p.m.—is *Theirs is the Glory*. Written by O. A. Gillespie, this is a tribute to the men of Anzac. Linked by the voices of two



N.P.S. photograph

RUTH GILBERT

*Trees and autumn are the symbols*

narrators and two soldiers, the programme tells the story of Gallipoli in the words of men who were there and offers a many-sided commentary on the campaign. Compton Mackenzie and John Masefield describe the young men who fought there. Pictures of the attack on Krithia are given by Sir Ian Hamilton (as he saw it from the deck of a ship off shore), and Major-General Sir Norman Weir, then a young lieutenant (as he saw it from the thick of the fight). Masefield comes back to describe the scene after the battle; and there

is a record of the impression Gallipoli made on one young New Zealand gunner. The blunt words of John North, "It was a squalid political story," and Liddell Hart, "A romantic halo has been created to obscure a lamentable story of lost opportunity," contrast with those of another writer, "The ultimately surviving impressions are those not of disgrace and horror, but of splendid audacity and gallant enterprise." They contrast, too, with the programme's summing up of just what the Gallipoli campaign meant in the balance sheet of the 1914-18 war.

*The Day Set Apart: the Remembrance of Anzac Day*, an NZBS production on the significance of this "day set apart" by the Parliament of New Zealand, will be heard on Anzac Eve from 1YZ at 7.55 p.m. and 3YZ at 8.0 p.m. Many stations, both National and Commercial, will broadcast other special programmes on Anzac Day. These include *A Name Was Born*, from 3ZB at 7.45 p.m., a programme of music by the Band of the First Otago Southland Regiment from 4YZ at 7.30 p.m., and relays of parts of Anzac Day evening concerts from 1ZB and 2ZA. Public commemorative services will be relayed at Auckland from 1YA and 1ZB, at Wellington from 2YA and 2YC, at Christchurch from 3YA and 3ZB, and at Dunedin from 4YA. Services at Whangarei, Hamilton, Gisborne, Rotorua, Napier, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Timaru and Invercargill will be relayed by the local stations. Details of special programmes and services will be found in the programme pages of this issue.

## LIGHT ON THE PRESIDENTIAL "PRIMARIES"

THE announcement by President Truman that he would not seek another term of office, and the emergence of General Eisenhower as a strong contender for the Republican nomination have provided the most resounding headlines so far in the American Presidential election campaign—headlines which may not be exceeded in size until the result of the election is known. But as the campaign follows its traditionally complex course there may be many other surprises for the American public—and for the world at large.

To get the varying shifts and changes of fortune into proper perspective it is necessary to know something

about the significance of the different stages of a campaign, from the time the various "bandwagons" start to roll to the final lap in the race, when the chosen candidates complete their personal nation-wide campaigning. There are three main stages in the process—first, the Presidential primaries, then the Republican and Democratic conventions (which are to be held this year in Chicago in the month of July), and lastly, the campaigns proper.

The Primaries are, of course, already under way, and at 1YC on Tuesday, April 22 (7.31 p.m.), they will be the subject of a panel discussion. The members of the panel will be A. K. Turner,

Q.C. (already known to listeners as a commentator in the NZBS *Lookout* session), who spent some time in the United States a year or two ago; Tom Bolster, an American journalist now working in Auckland; and R. M. Chapman, Lecturer in History at Auckland University College. The Primaries, of course—since they simply determine who shall be a State's representatives at the Republican or Democratic Conventions—may provide only a dim outline of the shape of things to come, but they can be the subject of endless speculation and the 1YC panel is not likely to be at a loss for the raw material of discussion.



SENATOR ESTES KEFAUVER



GENERAL EISENHOWER



SENATOR ROBERT TAFT