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WITHIN the sound of the Hutt River's peaceful afternoon song, velvet lawn beneath our feet, canopies of tender spring green over our heads, I talked to Constance Morice at Mrs. Knox Gilmer's country home the other day.

English mails had brought to us both the personal and more tangible side of last month's crisis . . . even in the peaceful New Zealand sunshine we found it easy to conjure up the curious, oppressive atmosphere that hangs over Europe.

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DR. MORICE, abroad for some months now, was in a little vessel off the west coast of lonely Skye when the crisis reached its climax. He knew nothing of the swift moves of Europe's rulers . . . a tiny radio set in a crofter's cottage on the Scottish coast gave him his first inkling of the tragedy of the situation. Back in Edinburgh he found the city in darkness, little huddled groups in Princes Street reading the latest bulletins by the aid of shaded torchlights.

Chamberlain's sincerity and single-mindedness was the one topic for talk. The immediate danger passed like a bad dream.

A fortnight later Dr. Morice was back in London, found the people querulous and critical, impatient of their Prime Minister's gallant move, inclin-



ed to believe that he had "let them down."

In a letter to his family in Wellington Dr. Morice was equally impatient of this type of person who, saved from the ghastly horrors of air raids and poison gas, indulges in an hysterical outburst of jubila-

It isn't so important that our ideals are found to be right or wrong, but it is most important that we HAVE ideals, that we look ahead with our own little hopes and plans to an Empire—to a world—where peace and goodwill mean more than just words on a Christmas card.

ONE stills feels so dazed and bewildered and so ashamed of our country that one finds it difficult to write about the situation.

"We Socialists always denounced the Government's policy of drift and of running away from dictators—also the

One of the finest plays I have seen in my life plays its note on this very theme.

"Idiot's Delight" came to London at the precise moment of the Austrian coup. Never had a play been more topical; in fact, but for the very tragedy of the whole thing, one might have been pardoned for imagining that Hitler collaborated in the most colossal publicity stunt in history!

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"IDIOT'S DELIGHT" introduces a group of little people washed together by chance and the closing of a frontier . . . the English honeymooners who hoped to enjoy a holiday on skis; the young French pacifist fresh from a conference against war; the old German scientist who will perhaps cure cancer and win the Nobel Prize if only they will let him carry his inoculated rats to Zurich; the American hooper with his sextet of chattering American chorus girls, traveling from hard times in Bucharest to perhaps better times (and audiences) at Geneva; the flamboyant Russian who is the mistress of an armament manufacturer; the Italian officer who does his watchdog job on the frontier, but wants no more wars because he remembers the last; the pleasant, simple waiter who is doomed to be the

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tion only to attack, a fortnight later, the very man whose sacrifices and personal bravery had made peace possible.

"Sometimes," he wrote, "it makes one ashamed of the British race."

★
"ASHAMED of the British race."

Yes, there's the tragedy of a whole Empire in that little phrase, but how often, how very often do we hear it nowadays!

Have we ceased to be great? Are the stamina and tradition and courage of our nation just so many pricked balloons?

How true are the words of Viscount Grey: "A man fails to be great because he has ceased to care—or may never have cared—for anything greater than himself."

★
PRIDE in one's country and one's heritage is more than a matter of politics, more than daily food and clothes and shelter, more than the books we read and the people we know.

THE other day I had a letter from an English woman for whom I have the greatest respect. She's Marjorie Pease, 73 years old, and an ardent Socialist. For years she has been associated with the British Labour movement, for years she has fought for better housing conditions, better schools; a more liberal educational system.

She loves England with a love that amounts almost to fanaticism. She has all the vigour of a woman half her age. Her weather-beaten face and shrewd kindly eyes in a cottage doorway have been welcomed by hundreds of penniless people whom she has never failed to help in a practical, down-to-earth way.

And this is where I want to stress the importance of ideals. In her letter she condemns Chamberlain . . . maybe I don't agree with her . . . but she loves England and humanity . . . her ideals are directed toward the same end as Chamberlain's: She wants to save the peoples of the earth.

I'll quote from her letter . . .

way they belittled the League. But we never dreamed we should find ourselves in the state we now are.

"Thank God for Chamberlain! I say curse him for landing us in such a shameful position."

"There is a very strong feeling in the country among Conservatives as well as others that Hitler's triumph does not mean peace, and we have certainly not got honour!"

"We now await Chamberlain's deal over Spain—I suppose he'll hand over Spain to Mussolini, and that is why he refuses to call Parliament till after this is accomplished."

"Of course, none of us wants war and we would not have had war if our Government had had a strong policy and worked with Russia. It is all terribly depressing."

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THE fiendish vengeance which dictators seem intent on wreaking on this old world of ours is pitiful when we look for a moment at the inevitability of the whole thing—the ease with which the you's and me's and the Smiths-next-door will all be dragged into a bloody massacre which none of us wants.

inevitable conscript, whether in the Austria-Hungary of his youth or in the Italian Empire that owns him in middle-age.

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AND there they all are, caught in a small Alpine hotel on the borders of Italy, Austria, Switzerland. They are travellers from anywhere to nowhere—nowhere that is safe, anyway.

Europe is drugged with false enthusiasms and the war planes from the base in the valley below the hotel are having a full-dress rehearsal.

Suddenly the whirring bombers fly north, and none who watches from the windows of the hotel knows that this time they mean abominable business . . . for declarations of war are things of the past. He who strikes first and quickly can count a few thousand extra dead on the credit side.

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SOME lines stick in my memory. The German professor (Deutschland Ueber Science), splendidly played by