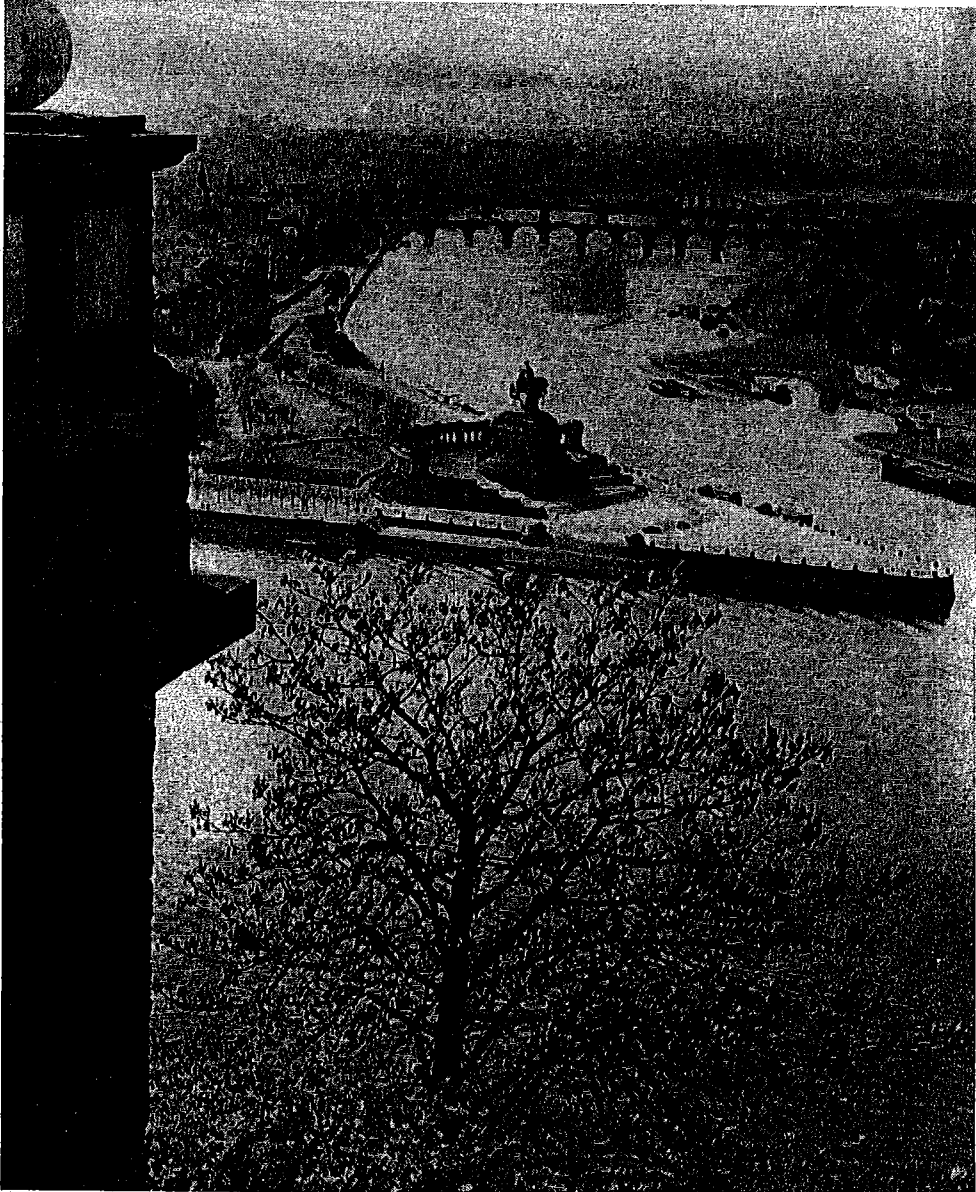


The Listener

Published every Thursday by The British Broadcasting Corporation



The Rhine at Coblenz where it is joined by the Moselle

The Allies in the Rhineland

(see pages 285 and 294)

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Vol. XXXIII No. 844

Thursday 15 March, 1945

REGISTERED AT THE G.P.
AS A NEWSPAPER

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Steps Towards San Francisco

By JOSEPH C. HARSCH

I AM sure that the first thoughts and interests on our side of the Atlantic this week* were very much like yours. Here, we began the week watching the allied armies move up to the Rhine, hoping that the crossing would come soon, but certainly not expecting it; and then it happened, and it was a wonderful feeling. For once, the breaks in war had fallen our way. The Rhine had seemed rather frightening to us before; let us admit it. The Germans did make a formidable mental barrier out of the Rhine. Then we heard that it had been only a mental barrier, not a physical one: the result was a profound sigh of relief—a real fear had been removed and everyone felt better, though without any indulgence in over-optimism.

Behind this calmness of reaction, there was new information about the future course of the war which I want to report in some detail, since it affects you as well as it does us. Washington was the scene this week of a technical conference on the Pacific war. Admiral Nimitz, who is the Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific Ocean area, was here from Guam; so was Admiral Halsey, who is one of his top Fleet Commanders. Add to them, General Wedemyer who commands the United States forces in China, and General Hurley, who is our Ambassador to China. It was obvious from just this list of names that the details of the next phase in the Pacific war were up for a decision, and that they had something to do with China. Further light came from Admiral

Nimitz himself, who held an unusually frank and lengthy pre conference. Most properly, he did not draw conclusions for his audience, but he did talk at length about how difficult it would be to maintain landings in Japan itself, against the bulk of the Japanese armies. He said that only about ten per cent. of the armies had been engaged in the island fighting. He talked about the need for many more positions than we have now for the final assault on the mainland of Japan, and he remarked that very large numbers of troops as well as planes and ships would be moved to the Pacific at once after the end of the war in Europe. From the army the next day came a further piece to fill into the pattern. Some of the divisions now fighting in Europe will go through the United States on the way to the Pacific to give the men furlough but some will not even have that much relief; they will go straight to the Far East. Put this with what Admiral Nimitz said. From the two, conclusions were drawn here. Perhaps the conclusions are wrong and perhaps there was a deliberate attempt to mislead for security reasons, but here the conclusions are.

First, if we cannot assault the main Japanese island without much larger allied ground and air forces than are now in the Far East, and second, if we cannot have them out there until after the end of the war in Europe, then the attack on Japan itself is not coming in the near future. Iwojima is not the last step on the straight road to Japan itself, but only one position from which that move can be supported.

* Broadcast on March 11

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Points from Letters

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Poetry in War Time

I do not see what 'reasons' Mr. Henry Reed can expect anyone to give who finds modern poetry to be uninspired, ungifted, shapeless, etc. If I say a pudding is heavy and has no currants in it I cannot give any 'reasons'. There is the pudding.

But when Mr. Reed gives us his 'one only' reason he simply misstates the facts. The 'perennial absurdity of the contemporary' is a figment of his imagination. Most great poets have enjoyed considerable appreciation in their lifetime. Tennyson certainly did, whatever 'Q's' grandfather may have thought. There is a great deal to show that the 'Lyrical Ballads' were not coldly received. Even Keats, though he died so young, lived to see himself acclaimed. (The *Quarterly's* rude remark, by the way, was only about 'Endymion'; *Blackwood's* was much worse; but reviewers were then notoriously conservative.) And Mr. Reed's assumption about Shakespeare and Marlowe is just an assumption. Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Shelley, Swinburne, Tennyson, Browning—even George Meredith, all were popular in their lives. (And Mr. George Bernard Shaw isn't doing so badly!)

No. So far from its being 'only the dead who are harmless and praiseworthy', it is always the immediately dead who are forgotten or belittled and (if they be truly great) have to wait for one or two or even more generations to come finally into their own.

Neither Mr. Reed nor I therefore will know for sure which of us is right, though I would be willing to make a small bet about it and deposit the stake with the Curator of the British Museum for the benefit of my great-grandchildren. If I were Mr. Eliot or Mr. Auden or Mr. Ezra Pound I shouldn't feel very sure of 'immortality'—or, being a modern poet, should I?

Lanë End

WILLIAM BLISS

When Mr. Reed writes, 'I believe pattern, form and finish to be only part of poetry; to put them at their highest they are only co-equal with what poetry has to say', I cannot forbear to say I agree. Not quite, however, in the way he means those last six words. Change *say* to *convey* and—there perhaps is the kernel of the difference. I read Brooke's immortal five sonnets again and I realise afresh as the great lines roll on that it is not tidiness but the movement and swell in words that makes them poetry. But if the pulse and the heart-beat is there, there is already that necessary fusion between logical sense and form (in this case metre) which is the miracle of poetry.

The *Quarterly* fell foul of Keats, finding no 'meaning' in 'Endymion'. This merely illustrates the complete destructive critical irresponsibility of those times. Nowadays the irresponsibility takes the form of literally illimitable gullibility—witness the 'Angry Penguins' and 'Ern Malley', an affair that isn't laughed off yet by any means. Then there was the gentleman who returned Keats' first collected volume to the bookseller's protesting it was 'little better than a take-in'. Where does this form of argument get you? They were wrong about Keats, Bizet, Wagner, Ibsen and Manet—therefore they are wrong about us'. *Non sequitur*. Queen Victoria, Mr. Gladstone, Ellen Terry and even Swinburne were devoted admirers of Marie Corelli. Contemporary verdicts have to be revised

both upwards and downwards but in the main, surely, are confirmed.

'The Muse has withdrawn'. That, says Mr. Reed, is the perennial cry of the dyspeptic *laudator temporis acti* impatient with the contemporary young. For Mr. Reed there has been no climacteric, no fundamental break, whereas for me self-evidently there has. Does it really count for nothing that in our time we have seen such freakish and crazy cults as 'dadaism, futurism, surrealism, atonality in music and functionalism in architecture? You cannot connive at functionalism in one art and decry it in another and, functionally speaking, the Ministry of Food's weekly Food Facts are masterpieces of English prose.

Poole

GEORGE RICHARDS

Nazism and Humanism

I would suggest to Mr. Herbert Ward that there is no possible analogy between the rule of the road from a canine point of view and human values from a human point of view. There may be a similarity between a dog's-eye view of vehicles and a man's-eye view of the stars, but I did not imply that the course of the stars was ordained by man. We were discussing abstract values, not physical facts.

Edgware

G. A. ALLAN

The English Bible

Listening to a recent Schools broadcast on 'The English Bible', for fourth forms (one of Stephen Potter's always admirable 'dramatic programmes') I noted that undue credit was given, as it so often is, to Henry VIII for his encouragement of the English Bible for English readers. What the King did was something different and considerably less. By 1540 (the date mentioned in the broadcast) it is true that Henry, under duress, permitted the reading of the Bible in English from English pulpits, which were still under his royal thumb—this having been substituted for the thumb of St. Peter to suit Henry's politics. But at the same time he forbade people throughout the kingdom to read the translated Scriptures for themselves. He issued an interdict to this effect. Incidentally he condemned to death by burning the 'worthy and learned' schoolmaster, John Lambert, whom Bible searching had led to the belief that Christ's body was not carnally present in the sacramental bread. Lambert's death was lamented 'by all pious and educated persons'. Nor was the inoffensive Lambert the only sufferer by a long way from Henry's ecclesiastical dictatorship. It seems wrong therefore to give to Henry such uncritical credit, especially where schoolboys and schoolmasters are concerned. As John Calvin, that acute observer of European politics, wrote (in March, 1539): 'The King himself is only half wise'.

London, N.W.1

CATHERINE CARSWELL

Life in a Children's Hospital

The letter purporting to come from 'Three Patients', published in THE LISTENER for March 1, cannot be allowed to go unanswered. I challenge the contention that the attitude of the matron and sister as given in the broadcast programme is not typical of that experienced by staff and patients at the large majority of children's hospitals of the country.

I claim some knowledge as for over forty years I have spent my life in hospitals and for the past twenty-seven years at one of the largest children's hospitals in the country where I have derived my greatest interest and happiness from the children themselves. I know most of the children's hospitals in Great Britain, including that from which the broadcast was made. We have in Birmingham a large orthopaedic hospital, and there is friendly rivalry between us as to which is the happier hospital, theirs or ours, but I can with confidence say that the whole organisation of both operates for the good of the patients, and the statement of the 'Three Patients' that 'the mere suggestion that a hospital is a place for a patient's welfare, let alone a patient's comfort, is frowned upon by the whole hierarchy', should be substantiated.

It is true hospitals have food problems, but a genuine effort is being made to improve institutional feeding. The difficulties are, however, not so much quality as staff. Many hospital patients are indebted to matrons and administrative sisters for having any meals at all. They have taken on the work of absent cooks and charwomen, in addition to their own work, with a cheerfulness which merits the greatest praise. The alternative would be closing. When the time comes for the war-time history of the hospitals to be written, they will not be ashamed of the part they have played for the good of the community in their particular sphere.

Birmingham

HAROLD F. SHRIMPTON,

House Governor, Children's Hospital

A misprint in Mr. M. Beddow Bayly's letter last week on 'Inoculation against Diphtheria' unfortunately made one sentence unintelligible. It should have read: 'The fact of its consisting essentially of toxoid does not conflict with my statement, for which I gave scientific evidence, that T.A.F. also contains serum', etc.

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Reply: Yes; but they wouldn't be Victorias. They would most likely be a wild plum on which the Victoria was budded. A few varieties such as greengages and damsons are often propagated in this way, but most plums are budded on to a wild plum. It is not a good practice to use Victoria suckers, even as stocks for budding and grafting, because of the danger of spreading silver leaf disease. An unhealthy tree usually sends up more suckers than a healthy one.

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