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Wordsworth preferred mountains to towns, and in that age in which the social pattern was conditioned by urban and industrial development I consider it fair to speak of retreat just as Matthew Arnold spoke of Wordsworth cutting himself off from the life of his time to live in a monastic seclusion of the spirit. Certainly I do not imply by retreat "escape" in any cheap or unfavourable sense—any more than Arnold implied it when he spoke of monastic seclusion; in fact, I go out of my way to show that for the early Romantics "escape" was the only possible form of counter-attack.

2. "A cliché view of Nietzsche." Mr. Grigson will agree that there was a Superman myth at the end of the last century and that the popular mind attributed its paternity to Nietzsche. I point out that Verne used this common myth in drawing his later romantic heroes, but I make it clear that for him (and for me) the myth really sprang from the practice of the freebooter capitalist individuals of the time (Jay Gould to Cecil Rhodes) and was a symptom of the slavish mass-worship of mere power and energy uncontrolled by reason, sentiment or morals. For Mr. Grigson I should have written "Nietzschean" in inverted commas, but I did not think it necessary to show that I did not share a view of Nietzsche old-fashioned even ten years ago among undergraduates.

3. "Speaking oddly of Clare as though he and Chatterton coincided in spirit and time." Is it odd to remark that Clare and Chatterton were both eighteenth-century poets (they were included in a list of others) who expressed their revolt against eighteenth-century common sense and literary *laissez-faire* either by suicide or madness? I can assure Mr. Grigson that I am tolerably well acquainted with the periods and work of Clare and Chatterton.

4. Philistinism and Samuel Palmer. Philistines can't see philistinism, of course, but where is Mr. Grigson's evidence apart from his perhaps fallible personal taste? I find in Palmer, Van Gogh, Whistler, Hopkins and a dozen other nineteenth-century artists a dynamic conception of treatment which accords well with the expansive qualities of the century.

5. I did not say that the nineteenth century was like the Renaissance because the former age thought it resembled the latter, but because—for all the real differences (the chief one being self-consciousness)—both were ages of intoxication over discoveries in geography and science, of conflicts between new science and orthodox religion, of individualism and progress. Both were ages in which a rapid improvement in the material conditions of life at one end of the scale of society was balanced by an equally rapid expansion of poverty at the other. As a whole chapter-section of my book is devoted to explaining this, Mr. Grigson has either failed to read or failed to understand me.

I leave it to your readers to decide about the silliness and the ignorance.—Yours faithfully,  
KENNETH ALLOTT.  
Redhurst, Crumleigh, Surrey.

## FREE TRADE OR PROTECTION

SIR,—In your issue of December 27th Mr. George Peel certainly clarifies the issue by explaining that when he quoted figures showing a decline in our exports and referred to the policy of Protection he did not mean the policy as adopted by Great Britain in 1932, but the Protective policy of the whole world. I am afraid, however, that he must have misled many other people besides your leader-writer and myself; nor, in view of the specific point with which I felt compelled to deal, is he, I think, justified in claiming such an immense superiority of vision. He now refers to the trade between ourselves and France, but surely that does not cover the whole world either. Will Mr. Peel examine the figures of our imports; those, I mean, from the whole world? They, like our exports, steadily increased following our adoption of Protection. Where, then, is the justification for the use of the word "restriction"? Making due allowance for other factors, among them the trade agreements which the policy alone made possible, the movement in our trade during this period is highly significant.—Yours faithfully,  
W. A. WELLS,  
News Editor.

Empire Industries Association, 9 Victoria Street, S.W. 1.

## PEZIZA COCCINEA

SIR,—Letters gratefully received from some of your readers, as well as Mr. Page's disclosure of his beneficent intention, shows that this exquisite little fungus, though shy and capricious in its favours, is not so rare as to excite writers on the English countryside for not even giving it a name. Mr. Bates' list seems to miss the point of my question, for none of his names has won an established, or even a momentary, place in literature. As to his statement that it is now more properly called *Geopysia*, this only shows that it has suffered from the Botanists a worse ignominy than neglect. *Peziza* has, at any rate for its first part, justification enough, *pezis* (peiza) being said to have meant a stalkless fungus, and most "red-cups" being, if my memory is correct, without stalk. The prefix in the "more proper" name requires that *pezis* (pyxis) should have its Greek sense of a vessel of box-wood, and as the fungus does not spring from the earth, as the prefix should imply, and is not made of box-wood, no name could well be more improper.—I am, Sir, yours &c.,  
F. J. LYS.  
Worcester College, Oxford

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Starlings: Increase or Decrease?

My recent remarks on the possible decrease in the population of starlings has brought me an extremely interesting pamphlet reprinted by Miss Jane Meiklejohn from the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*. Unfortunately, this paper, in spite of an admirably detailed analysis of starling roosts, movements and the various figures obtained by the experimental census of 1938, was completed too early to include any discussion of the results of the great frost of early 1940. The most popular and frequently repeated assertion about the starling is that it is increasing rather than decreasing in numbers. Only a census taken over a period of years can decide this; Miss Meiklejohn, however, refers to an inexplicable and sensational increase in the numbers of British starlings between 1840 and 1890, when starlings began to take up residence and breed in localities where they had hitherto been known as rare birds. Bewick, who died in 1828, apparently cherished a hope that starlings would nest in his house, but the hope remained unfulfilled. Miss Meiklejohn quotes Yarrall (4th ed., 1882) as one of the references describing this increase; yet my own copy of Yarrall, which is dated 1843, contains what is evidently the same reference, describing starlings as congregating "in millions." It seems scarcely possible that a bird that was fairly uncommon before 1840 should have become "very numerous as a species, and pretty generally distributed" by 1843. Hewitson, in 1846, and Morris, in 1860, both refer to enormous congregations of starlings, especially near the sea coast, as if they were no new phenomenon. It seems quite likely, therefore, that the sensational increase to which Miss Meiklejohn refers began to take place before rather than after 1840.

### Friend or Enemy?

The real purpose of the pamphlet is, however, to decide whether or not the starling is an agricultural pest. Here, again, conclusive results can only be obtained by exhaustive tests of a large percentage of the starling population over a period of years. Starlings are accused of eating wheat, which they undoubtedly do, but the stomachs of thirteen starlings shot "in the act of eating grain" contained 91 caterpillars, 65 leather-jackets, 30 wireworms, 74 click-beetles, 34 dung-beetles, and 30 weevils. It is significant that a disastrous increase in all these pests occurred in the spring of 1940 after a prolonged period when starlings were either being starved to death or were deprived of their usual sources of food. Another accusation against the starling is that it is carrier of foot-and-mouth disease. Large numbers of migratory starlings leave the Continent every winter and join the great flocks here in England; but no one has yet proved that a disease may be carried by one migratory species and not another. The starling, indeed, as Miss Meiklejohn points out, is still imperfectly known. Whether it is increasing or decreasing, whether it is friend or foe, whether it carries disease or not, are all questions to which the answers are so far inconclusive. Odd that a bird now numbered by millions should so remain something of a mystery.

### Vegetable Surplus

It is a very deplorable thing to read that huge quantities of surplus green vegetables are being taken back from Covent Garden to the farms, and there fed to cattle: yet here, it seems to me, is the logical result of the Dig for Victory campaign, which was run more by slogans than imagination. It is estimated that a shortage of green vegetables occurs in England only one year in ten, a fact of which the public was never reminded. Dig for Victory in consequence became roughly synonymous with cabbages and potatoes, which were precisely the vegetables the small grower ought to have been encouraged to avoid. Gardeners were earnestly entreated to grow greater quantities of vegetables, rather than greater quantities of as many different varieties as possible. Looking back over the year, I find to my surprise that I have cultivated forty different varieties of vegetables, which did not include parsnips, endive, cucumber, seakale, artichokes, shallots or broccoli. I do not know what slogans are being planned for 1941, but I hope at least one of them will call for more enterprise and less nonsense about "every available inch." The day of lettuces in the window-ledge, cabbages in tubs, beans in petrol-cans, spinach in the rose-bed and radishes on the roof has, I hope, gone for ever.

### Swans

As if to supplement my remarks of last week, a magnificent flight of six swans has passed over while these notes were being written. One thing about them (apart from the fact, of course, that they were flying at all) was notable. Like good pilots, they appeared to be setting a course that allowed some degrees for the deflection of a strong north-east wind. A fully-grown male swan, by the way, weighs thirty pounds and has a wing-span of six feet. But one of the most remarkable things about a swan is revealed by Yarrall's illustration of the breastbone. The forward curve of the keel, the ribbing, the forked bone riding out like a figurehead are all uncannily like the bones of a Viking ship.

H. E. BATES.

## THE NEW GREAT FIRE

SIR,—To praise *The Spectator* would too often be to gild the lily: and neither task does any moderately sensible man take in hand. With that premise, may I express a feeling of considerable disappointment at the inadequacy of the references in last week's *Spectator* to what happened in the City of London on Sunday night? With more than ordinary eagerness I turned to its pages: nothing much in "News of the Week"; well, there would be a leader of the most weighty over page, and "Janus" would not miss such an opportunity. But at least the silence still prevailing would be broken by a notable "middle article." Not a bit of it—and the browser on old *Spectators* a century hence will not know that anything out of the common took place on Sunday, December 29th, turning dark night into a horrible and sinister caricature of day.

No one who was there to see (and the St. Paul's community was in the midst of it) can have thought of the rain of man-made fire from heaven, with its horrible results, as other than a revelation of something utterly foul and vile. With it any compromise is impossible. But to say all that needs to be said calls for the tongue of a Gladstone or the pen of *The Spectator*.  
J. K. MOZLEY.  
St. Paul's Cathedral.

SIR,—In your note in "News of the Week" in the issue of January 3rd on "The Burned City Churches" you remark that no restoration can give us back Wren. This seems to me quite untrue. One cannot recover a picture from fragments except in rare cases. With statuary the task is less difficult. With architecture one can restore everything except the patina of time, which is mainly a tourist-asset. When himself did not hew every stone of St. Bride's and lay them one upon another. It is the design that is Wren's and what is there to stop us carrying out that design—and any other—again? In most cases I understand the shells of the churches survive to work on. It is mere pedantry or sentimentality to deny that the results of rebuilding would be by Wren. I am without any facilities for reference at the moment, but I believe that one or two City churches have been re-erected in the suburbs already. If this is so, it is an example to follow; if not, we can, after the war, set the example. Many churches, which are now dwarfed by towering offices, could then be decently displayed. The sale of sites should cover a good deal of the cost. But let us avoid both sentimentality and philistinism in these matters.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,  
Horndon, Hants. GEOFFREY WALTON.

## WYKEHAMIST DEPORTEE

SIR,—On July 26th you published a letter from me concerning a Winchester College boy, a German Jew refugee, who had been seized by the Hants police and subsequently deported to Canada. According to Mr. Peake's statement in the House of Commons the treatment of these refugees in Canada was to be very lenient and sympathetic. Actually it still leaves a great deal to be desired. This boy, whose only fault was being over 16 and being at Winchester in a prohibited area, is now treated very much like a prisoner of war. All his own clothes have been taken away from him, and he has to wear a sort of convict's garb, he is kept behind barbed wire, he is not allowed to do any work outside the camp, Canadians are not allowed to visit him, he has been separated from the other Winchester College boys, and all his public school friends—all apparently through no fault of his. I sent him a reply-paid cable on October 6th, saying the Government was willing to send him back to this country—he received my cable on November 1st and replied the same day. I received his reply on December 10th. I tried to send him money through my bank, but the Government stopped it. We have sent two parcels, but cannot find out that he has ever received them. I received on Friday last a reply to my letter of August 23rd—nearly four months! The delays through the censorship are still terrible.

If everything were as satisfactory as is represented in the House of Commons, all these troubles would not occur.—Yours faithfully,  
20 Chichester Road, Croydon. STANLEY J. BENHAM.

## THE QUESTION OF "IT"

SIR,—With reference to the mild controversy on the subject of IT, surely the credit for IT's invention (though he might not have coveted it) belongs to Rudyard Kipling?

I quote from "Mrs. Bathurst" (*Traffics and Discoveries*, published 1907 or earlier):

"I can remember (says Pritchard), every time that I ever saw Mrs. B."

"So can I—an' I've only been to Auckland twice—how she stood an' what she was sayin' an' what she looked like. That's the secret. 'Tisnt beauty, so to speak, nor good talk necessarily. It's just IT. Some women'll stay in a man's memory if they once walk down a street, but most of 'em you can live with a month on end, an' next commission you'd be put to it to certify whether they talked in their sleep or not, as one might say."—Yours faithfully,  
SUSAN INGLIS.

Yonder, Church Lane, Beeding, Steyning, Sussex

## COUNTRY LIFE

## Expert Report

That birds are very little affected by air-raids, and that they "get used to anything which does not directly interfere with their movement," is the expert opinion of Mr. R. M. Lockley, whose observations of bird-life on the island of Skokholm became famous before the war. Mr. Lockley, for obvious reasons, can no longer carry on those observations in Skokholm itself, but he sends me some interesting reflections on what we now know to have been the coldest January in England for more than a hundred years. They are surprising reflections. "The frost of early-1940 seems to have affected bird populations even less," he says, "than the cold spells of 1917 and 1929." His reason, and it seems to me essentially sound, is that though birds may die in extremely bitter weather, "somehow the numbers are covered up in a short time." Most reported decreases, he believes, are local, and do not hold good for the whole country, and he declares that "even starlings, which in cold weather flock in myriads to West Wales, and perish in hundreds, do not show an appreciable diminution afterwards, except locally."

## Worst Casualties

Mr. Lockley's list of those birds which suffered most is also interesting, and again, I think, a little surprising. One would expect to find among such things fragile creatures as red-buntings, wood-larks, skylarks, meadow-pipits, wrens, robins, kingfishers, but hardly herons, wood-pigeons, or lap-wings. And though here again the decreases are largely reported as local, it is astonishing to find neither linnet nor finches among the worst sufferers. Among species generally affected, Mr. Lockley holds long-tailed tits, gold-crests and Dartford warblers to have suffered very severely, and thinks that the bearded tit was almost exterminated. Birds, as we know, were iced up, claws and tails frozen to roosting perches, but still not with that severity reported by Gilbert White, who wrote how "rooks, attempting to fly, fell from the trees with their wings frozen together." Mr. Lockley, who is now on the mainland of West Wales, concludes by reporting that buzzards are very numerous there—due apparently to "the abundance of rabbits, which in turn is due to the rabbit-trap killing out all natural checks—weasels, stoats and polecats."

## Log Fire

In view, perhaps, of possible difficulties about coal, one or two correspondents have asked me to include here a note about woods for burning. The log fire is a romantic thing, but, I think, over-rated, and probably uneconomic; it can never compare for heat and qualities of endurance, as well as beauty, with the combined fire of wood and coal. There is, however, no wood like oak. From the tree-heart it burns like a torch, with fierce blue-white fringes of flame; ten years after cutting, heat brings out a steady sizzle of sap that is a delight. Next to it I should put beech, steady and crimson, and ash, a wood of bright candle-splendour, good when green, kindling a little sere. Elm is maligned, and yet in reality is excellent when long-seasoned, a process for which ten years in the barn is not too much. Light woods, from quick-growing trees, willow, poplar, birch, and so on, have no endurance, and when green are fussy, needing a feed of coal. All pine and fir is dangerous; sparkling, vitriolic stuff, fatal to leave unattended. Sweet chestnut is also a sparkler, but there is hardly a better wood, white as bone, for kindling. Among really bad woods I should put horse-chestnut: hard, leaden, covering itself in store with a sour bloom of Stilton-green mould, and with it most fruit-woods when green. The prettiest wood, but an average burner, is alder; a heart as orange as a marigold. One word of warning to new country dwellers: the gentleman with the black neck-muffer, the 10-cwt. Ford down on the axes, and the load of sawn logs knows more about the game than you do. His first quotation is, like the carpet-sellers, simply a reconnaissance-flight of hope. Offer him a third, even a quarter, and he will rush to the driving-seat and make wild efforts to drive out of your sight. Walk away, and he will run after you, shouting cut-price bargains. Entrench yourself behind a concrete wall of determination, and you will buy at something like the correct valuation, and earn his respect in the bargain. And finally look at the wood. Infinitely it purports to be oak—and rarely is.

## Correction

Some readers have searched in vain for *The Gardeners' Calendar*, which I mentioned here a week or two ago. It is not very surprising that they have been unable to find it, and I must apologise for the mistake. The book is *The Gardeners' Companion* (Dent, 7s. 6d.), and is, still, of course, obtainable. H. E. BATES.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Readers are again reminded of the necessity of ordering "The Spectator" regularly, since newspapers can no longer be supplied on sale-or-return terms.

## COUNTRY LIFE

## Gardening Shows

It is excellent news that the Royal Horticultural Society is to reintroduce its programme of small monthly shows in Westminster. In peace-time nothing seemed to bring the country to London so effectively and with such charm, and the small mid-winter shows, fresh with clusiana tulips and new narcissi out before their time, and fragrant with rarer daphnids and coloured fuchsias, were more intimate, and to the real gardener more satisfactory than Chelsea. It occurs to me that the Ministry of Agriculture might follow the courageous example of the R.H.S., or even co-operate with it, and hold similar monthly shows at which early produce could be shown and sound advice be given to a vast and rather bewildered gardening public. A large part of that public still does not know whether it will serve the country better by growing peas or potatoes, or which varieties to grow, or which fertilisers to apply. A regular programme of shows in the larger cities, where the eye and ear could take in quick and instructive lessons for the experts, would be of immense value. Indeed, I believe that one such show, with its essentially practical and visual appeal, would do more good, and do it more quickly, than a mountain of official pamphlets.

## Cackle Pie

The cut in the meat ration is a depressing though not desperate thing, and it is a sad day for all of us, and for bird-lovers especially, when writers begin to advocate the shooting of gulls and small singing-birds as articles of food. I have before me a periodical in which a writer is at much pains to discuss the gastronomic beauty not only of sparrow-pie, but of chaffinches, bullfinches, fieldfares, red-wings, lapwings, woodpeckers, moorhens and curlew. Of gulls—which have always been considered unlucky birds to shoot—the article declares “they will help to make a decent hotpot with sage and onions, and sausages if they can be bought.” It recalls that “a Queen of England was specially fond of bull-finch pie”; it describes starlings, which are highly obnoxious creatures, as “quite palatable”; it refers to pickled puffs as having been once widely eaten in this country; and it finally excuses itself with the naïve remark that “we should, however, beware of killing too many of our birds.” The many bird-lovers who read this page will, I think, have their own answer to that. To me it only occurs that though there never seems to be too many birds, there are times when there seem to be just a few too many writers.

## Venison Sausages

There is, however, one article of war-time food on which I should like enlightenment. About a year ago a Scottish ghillie, with the rich persuasive accents of a highlander who knew what he was talking about, came upon the microphone to tell the world of the advent of a new and remarkable delicacy—venison sausages. In a country which makes the least imaginative sausages in Europe, this promised to be a splendid thing. I recall the almost succulent accounts of the ghillie as he described how the deer could be driven down from the moors, how the carcasses would be selected and quartered, and how finally the result would reach the public in sausage form. If I am not mistaken he gave a warning that though venison sausages would be plentiful they would also be something of an acquired taste. How very right he was! The taste for venison sausages is something for which the public, apparently, is not yet educated; for from that day to this the public never seems to have heard of them again. I can only conclude they were buried side by side with macon.

## Wild Daphne

The first stars of pink on the mezereum bush (*daphne mezereum*) set me wondering if the plant ever had any just claim as a native plant. Books tie on to it the vague label “garden escape” without elaboration. As a garden plant it grows prodigious bushes on midland clay, and was once, with madonna lilies and maiden's blush, one of the three indispensable graces of all gardens. Yet the most magnificent display of it I ever saw, making a dwarf avenue of most fragrant pink, was high up in Surrey chalk, and my only authentic record of it growing wild was in Kent, up in the chalk again. Does it still grow wild, and if so would *Spectator* readers care to give me instances of it? Or is it one more of those capricious things, bird-sown, that masquerade in wild places? H. E. BATES.

## MUSIC

## An American Symphony

The United States have been slow, presumably because they had to build upon European foundations, in creating a characteristic style of their own in the arts which one could immediately recognise as American. But in literature they have already produced poets who are genuinely American, and among novelists, one who stands beside the greatest of any land. Their architects have long deserted the European style and evolved one developed from the physical conditions of their problems and the materials at hand. In painting, too, apart from individual contributions to the European treasury, like Whistler's, they are evolving, as any number of *Life* will show you, a pictorial language that is distinctive, with accents that one may call trans-Atlantic. Only in music have they lagged behind, in spite of a widespread interest and a wealthy patronage of the art. Or perhaps it is on account of that, for the interest is apt to be ingenuous, too ready to take for granted the judgement of pundits and to accept the standards of the European classics.

It was particularly interesting, therefore, to find in Randall Thompson's Second Symphony, which was played at last Saturday's Royal Philharmonic concert, a new, authentic note that one could recognise as American—something taut and steely, devoid for the most part of conventional frills and informed with a dry, incisive humour that, like American jokes, asks for a quick wit in the hearer. And this note was sounded in a work that is conventional in form and not at all “advanced” in harmony, though its rhythms sometimes owed their liveliness (without falling into the insipidity of mere insistence) to those of the dance-band. The actual orchestration was mainly responsible for producing this effect of a “national” utterance, though the themes, too, had a twang that seemed to be generalised rather than the individual intonation of the composer's voice.

The symphony is not by absolute standards a great work. The slow movement of modest dimensions hardly gets beyond the shallows of an amiable sentiment. And the finale, which begins with a good tune, dwindles into triviality with a commonplace descending scale in the bass serving as support to the somewhat flimsy structure. It was unfortunate that the programme note should have mentioned that someone or other, apparently without the composer's authority, had labelled this movement with the grandiose title of “Celebration of Democracy,” which inevitably raised expectations of a flight into regions where even Beethoven himself was not entirely successful in maintaining altitude. But, odious comparisons apart, the finale is not of a stature to make a satisfactory ending to a symphony. Yet, even with the disadvantage of being placed after a little masterpiece of the form, Mozart's “Prague” Symphony, and before Sibelius's popular Second, the new work held the interest. If it could not be said to “make a summer,” it at least raised hopes of its being the first tardy swallow of a flight from across the Atlantic.

DYNELEY HUSSEY.

## ARCHITECTURE

## Bombed Churches

CORRESPONDENCE columns have been full of suggestions about how to deal with the ruined City churches. Dr. Julian Huxley has proposed that they should be rebuilt where they are. Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis thinks that they might go to the Provinces; Mr. Raglan Squire sees an opportunity for the younger members of the architectural profession with their “more positive outlook,” and Sir Reginald Blomfield has used the word “modernism” again. Yet there is only one sensible thing that can be done: the thing that was done (more or less) in Wren's time, and at all other times when people have shown any sign of an architectural conscience—take the advice of a good architect. One or two people have made suggestions that would be only funny if there was not a danger in this age (which has no architectural conscience) that they might be adopted. The most insinuating of these suggestions is that the ruined City churches should be rebuilt, stone by stone, in open spaces with plenty of grass round them “so that they can, for the first time, be seen.”

Before the war, England was becoming a museum dotted with council houses. What nobody realised was that the museum exhibits in the open spaces—abbeys, churches, tumuli and so on—were as menacing as the council houses. For they were dying and being embalmed. For years the Office of Works has been taking the ivy off the ruined walls of abbeys and castles, short-



## COUNTRY LIFE

## Think for Victory

The chairman of the Allotments and Gardens Committee, Mr. H. Berry, whose criticism of me appears in *The Spectator* of last week, refers to "Mr. Bates and other non-growers of storable vegetables." But since when have I been a "non-grower of storable vegetables"? In my next paragraph Mr. Berry will find a list, given in response to many correspondents, of the forty varieties of vegetables grown by me in the year 1940. The size of this list has nothing at all to do with the fall of France, since it was planned at least three months before that event; it has nothing to do with "early official injunctions," but is the result, I hope, of my own common-sense; finally, it was accomplished without the digging up of a single inch of border, bed, or lawn. In it Mr. Berry will note that, so far from my being a "non-grower of storable vegetables," there are twelve varieties of storable vegetables; and he will also note that it contains a further twelve varieties, such as brussels-sprouts, kale, and so on, which remain in the open ground during winter. Nor have I any surplus. I assume no cloak of wisdom after the event. At intervals during the last fifteen months I have been urging readers of this column not only to grow more vegetables but to grow them more intensively and more imaginatively—until they must, I fear, be growing tired of it. Finally, Mr. Berry asks if it really is a deplorable thing that surplus green vegetables, grown for human food, should be given to cattle? Isn't it deplorable? Isn't it deplorable that food should be sent to London and, in these very difficult days of transport, sent back again? Isn't it deplorable that some hard-working farmer or market-gardener should have to pay double freightage-costs on his produce and then not sell it? I think it surely is.

## The Forty Varieties

Here then is my list of forty varieties. It contains three things, tomatoes, melons and rhubarb, which are perhaps more strictly fruit, though they are extremely useful foods. Mr. Berry, and the various correspondents who have asked for the list perhaps a little incredulously, may like to note that the figures in parentheses refer to the number of sowings, or crops, of each variety: potatoes (3), peas, carrots (6), onions (2), pickling onions, white turnips (3), yellow turnips, celery, celeriac, chicory, scorzonera, salsify, swedes, rhubarb, couve Tronchuda, chou de Burghley, spring cabbage, calabrese, purple-sprouting broccoli, perennial-sprouting broccoli, broad beans, asparagus, lettuce (4), runner-beans, savoy, haricot-beans, French beans (green and yellow), spinach (2), tomatoes (2), melons, asparagus kale, leeks (3), purple cabbage, cress, cauliflowers (2), beetroot (2), marrow, radishes, summer cabbage. There is no stunt about this list, which contains items of delicious and varied food which may be found in any reliable catalogue. (It may be worth noting, by the way, that seeds of many varieties in it were obtained through the Women's Institute scheme, and in every case yielded first-class results. At half-a-crown the W.I. boxes of seeds, put up by a world-famous firm, are an incomparable bargain.) Nor, finally, does the list pretend to be complete; the number of varieties could be increased, without the slightest trouble, to fifty.

## Birds in Snow

The effect of snow on birds is often to make their habits seem new and even fanciful. Rooks, ordinarily great travellers, roaming the countryside in crafty reconnaissance parties, seem forced like aircraft to remain at home. They gather on the lower branches of trees, especially oaks, and engage in long conferences, hunched up like magistrates against the cold, occasionally taking a feed off the bark. Heads down, they sometimes preside there for long hours, as if unable to come to a decision about the state of emergency. Ducks are also bewildered; they do not understand ice, on which their feet make a single line of perfect convict arrows, and in snow they sink up to their breasts, so that they seem to squirm along, without legs, looking even for ducks highly comic. Geese remain stately; but it is astonishing to discover that they are not white at all, but a buttery cream, and that against the background of snow they seem reduced about one-third in size. Some smaller birds, in snow, appear suddenly plumped up; blackbirds and thrushes look muddled and obese. But it is the still smaller birds that are, as it were, truly lit up by snow. The red and pink of robin and chaffinch glow with warmer delicacy, and the legs of all small birds are revealed in all their miraculous fragility—slender and frail as legs of grass.

H. E. BATES.

## THE THEATRE

## "Dear Brutus" At the Globe

MR. JOHN GIELGUD's production of *Dear Brutus* is the kind of theatrical "event" which we had almost forgotten: an all-star cast, a play which occupies in the affections of many older people the position of a minor classic, an opportunity to compare impressions. "Do you remember Gerald du Maurier as Dearth, Alfred Drayton as the butler Matey?" *The Spectator* seems regrettably not to have noticed the original production, or it would have been interesting to follow changes in taste from those last-war years, to have discovered whether one's predecessor really swallowed the great sentimental scene between the artist-wastrel and his dream-daughter without protest. We have since those days—superficially at any rate—toughened: our literature has become less fanciful and self-pity is less prominent; but after the lapse of disappointing years, when no sustained talent more important than Mr. Noel Coward's has appeared in the theatre, it is possible to recognise how superbly Barrie knew his job. Mr. Coward's works already bear the lines of time more deeply.

Barrie was a master at arousing attention. If his plays had all remained unfinished in the manner of *Shall We Join The Ladies?* what magnificent fragments we should possess. From the first stumbling politenesses with which the ladies of Lob's strange house-party feel their way into the darkened drawing-room after dinner Barrie holds us. The exposure of the butler's theft, the feminine blackmail as they threaten him with the police—"tell us why we have been invited here, or else": the suggestion of mystery, even danger, the guarded references to a wood that doesn't exist—the dramatist's hand has fallen in the first minute firmly on our shoulder and holds us inexorably to our seat. The comedy is chilled with an authentic grue. And what magnificent comedy it is: the lines have dated no more than Wilde's—Matey's appeal, "I am not bad naturally. It was just going into domestic service that did for me; the accident of being flung among bad companions"; Purdie making love, "You are so fluid, Joanna; why are you so fluid?"; and Purdie being strenuously loyal to his wife, "It is my invariable custom to go straight off and buy Mabel something whenever you have been sympathetic to me. Those new earrings of hers—they are in memory of the first day you called me Jack. Her Paquin gown—the one with the beads . . ." It is perfect, so long as it is light. If only, we feel, it could have ended there, with the pilfering butler and the philandering Purdie and the odd primeval Lob just hinted at by Matey: "A married lady can tell a man's age by the number of his razors. If you saw his razors—there's a little world of them, from patents of the present day back to implements so 'orrible, you can picture him with them in his 'and scraping his way through the ages," and the midsummer wood right off the stage and all the seriousness. . . . But then, of course, we should have lost the superb last act when the characters drift confusedly back with their embarrassing memories of what they have made of their second chance.

The flaw is Dearth, the artist, his unsatisfactory wife and the daughter who might-have-been. Barrie should have kept, like Wilde, to the surface, for below the surface he discovered only a rather shameful infantilism and an immense self-pity. Self-knowledge taught him nothing; his own intimate weakness shied away from the parallel world of drunkards and artists. The man Dearth with his slang exclamation, "Crack-in-the-eye, Tommy," his appalling gusto—"How I used to leap out of my bed at six in the morning to have a crack at my easel"—is no more an artist than he is a waster; he is like the substitute-dream we are told that our Freudian censor lets slip by; he belongs to Mr. Darling and the Never-Never Land and "Do you believe in fairies?" His port is as phosphorescent as the poison in Tinkerbell's glass, and out of the black weeds of sinister Mrs. Dearth wandering through the wood deserted by that "rotter," the Hon. Archie Finch-Fallowe, we almost expect to hear the warning tick-tock of the crocodile's alarm clock.

To the notorious and unremunerative part of Dearth, Mr. Gielgud has devoted his immense talent—nobody could make it more palatable. And the same may be said of Miss Margaret Rawlings as the passionate husky Mrs. Dearth. All the real fun, of course, goes to the others, and they bandy it superbly: the graceful masterly lines lie like cream on the tongue. It is unfair—but irresistible—to pick out Mr. Roger Livesey as Matey, Mr. George Howe as Lob and Mr. Ronald Ward as Purdie.

GRAHAM GREENE.

## COUNTRY LIFE

## Indoor Branches

Early forced flowers tend to be more and more expensive. Branches of spring-flowering shrubs, brought into the house now, will develop flowers with astonishing rapidity, and will give a good deal of pleasure. Forsythia, to all appearances dead for the winter, will begin to show lemon-green buds in about seven days, and will flower for some weeks. Flowering-currant is a little slower; almond is quite quick, the cherry-tinged buds charming; prunus, cherries and pyrus japonica are all suitable. It is a good thing to cut varieties in order of flowering, beginning with forsythia and working up to the later varieties, such as prunus. A little bruising of the wood will help to quicken the flowering. Of catkins, both hazel, which came out before Christmas, and pussy willow, are the obvious choices. But alder should be tried. Its rich dark tawny purple tassels would make an excellent foil for the stars of forsythia or the flowers of the currant, which, when forced, are white.

## Holly Crop

The holly is one of the features of the English countryside which always astonish foreigners; to Englishmen it is a traditional tree, so that as soon as it lacks berries it appears to some people to have failed in a national duty. A correspondent asks why there are no berries this year. The answer is quite simple. During the winters of 1938-39 and 1939-40 hollies were trees of fire; it so happened that these magnificent crops of berries coincided with very harsh periods of weather. This year there has been more bitter weather, but no berries; again a coincidence. For the holly, like other trees, bears flowers, but after the severe late winter of 1940 there were no flowers. During the two previous years the crop of holly-blossom—miniature nose-gays of charming, unobtrusive, creamy-pink—was very heavy. Those who wish to forecast next winter's berry-crop should, in fact, watch the holly-trees during the next two or three months.

## Land Workers

Farmers generally must have been relieved by the intimation that a postponement of the calling up of agricultural workers is under official consideration. Drainage and ploughing are jobs of increasingly urgent importance. Farmers are fully aware of their responsibilities, and are anxious to fulfil them, but that fulfilment will be almost impossible without adequate male labour. Land-girls, as a farmer pointed out to me, may be excellent, but many farm jobs are physically outside their scope. A market gardener, working on the Dutch-light system, pointed out another thing. In spring time he plants out thousands upon thousands of lettuces, working from very early morning to very late at night. But at five o'clock, when he was getting his second-wind, his otherwise excellent land-girl had finished her day. He could not afford overtime, and as a large part of his own day had been spent in teaching the girl various jobs he found finally that he was better off without her. But generally, I think, there is little but kindness and forbearance in the farming attitude towards land-girls, who will obviously prove of considerable value on lighter work as spring advances.

## In the Garden

Perhaps the commonest mistake among gardeners is wastage of seeds during sowing. There are several ways of making seed go further. With onions and leeks, for example, the sowing of seed in boxes, and afterwards the transplanting of the young plant, will ensure that practically every seed sown will mature. Thick-sown onions and carrots are extremely wasteful. Two tips for sowing outdoors: first, never sow from the packet unless your hand is really steady. Empty the seeds into a saucer and sow snuff-fashion, pinch by pinch, the thinner the better; second, draw fairly shallow drills and leave them open for several hours before sowing. This should dry top-soil, and, if the day is sunny, warm the drill. When covering the seed try dispensing with the rake, and using the shuffle technique; i.e., walk along each row, feet apart, and shuffle the soil into the drill. This will distribute the soil very lightly, and, if correctly done, will throw the warmest, driest soil directly on to the seeds. Finally, look up the catalogue and get expert guidance on how far the seed should go. One ounce of turnips, for example, should sow a 200 ft. row. How often does it?

H. E. BATES.

though it seems to a writer who has considered his subject neither aesthetically nor economically, still prefer our birds alive.—  
Yours, &c.,  
H. E. BATES.

The Granary, Little Chart, Ashford.

## MR. PIPER'S HERESIES

Sir.—In the course of his kindly attack on me Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis advocates the removal of as many as possible of the Wren churches "to less boorish and less menacing surroundings, where neighbourly good manners might, one hopes, be guaranteed in perpetuity by some measure of civilised restraint of building." I still feel that any good city church would look foolish in an open space, and worse than foolish as part of modern development schemes as we know them. We have not yet found out how to "develop" open fields without obliterating them by sham Tudor villas, super-cinemas and service roads.

In his defence of what he calls "that most efficient custodian, the Office of Works," he has given such a beautiful description of early nineteenth-century scenes in mediaeval churches depicted by Prout and Catermole that anyone can see he is as deeply moved by old buildings that have rich pictorial texture as I am, and just as "incurably sentimental" about them. When I spoke of the tidings-up, the levellings and re-roofings by the Office of Works I was simply pointing out that this body has by now filmed most of our national monuments from the artist and handed them over to the historian. They are no longer incipient pictures, they are museum exhibits. Their iron notice-boards with politely embossed words imply as much, as well as spoiling the view.

It is no use for Mr. Williams-Ellis to pose as an archaeologist. He knows that what he likes about a Cotswold manor house is that it is beautiful, not that it is old. He knows that a fifteenth-century manor house like that at Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire could be measured, drawn and wholly incarcerated in a learned work within a month at a thousandth of the cost in money and trouble of the "protective" work that the Office of Works has been doing there for years. He knows that to the historian with no eyes these records would be as useful as the building itself, and that any historian with eyes prefers a real ruin to a mummified one. He knows, too, that a couple of cows grazing form a more sensible foreground for such a ruin than a couple of motor mowers inside an iron fence. Every guide-book writer is wise to the folly fifty years after the wholesale "restoration" of our parish churches has been finished. Let us be a bit wiser about the wholesale "protective" work (equally misnamed) that the Office of Works is doing under our noses.—Yours, &c.,

JOHN PIPER.

## A SHERBORNE DEPORTEE

Sir.—The letter which you published some time ago from Mr. S. J. Benham on a Winchester College boy describes treatment in some respects similar to that received by a Sherborne boy, particulars of which have come to my notice; and it clearly indicates that arrangements for dealing with interned refugees have been most unsatisfactory. This boy of just over 16 is personally known to me; he was sent first to Canada and then to Australia. An account of the voyage has been received by a member of the Victoria International Emergency Council, Melbourne, who states that 3,500 men were crowded into a small ship, called the 'Dunera', 11,000 gross tonnage, fitted out to carry 1,000. This boy with 130 others were somewhere aft with neither bunks or mattresses for the entire voyage, which lasted eight weeks, and during that time the internees had half an hour each on deck.

There were three deaths and one suicide. When the men came on board the soldiers ripped open their luggage with bayonets and tipped the contents either overboard or into the hold. Over 1,000 watches, all their money and valuables and most of their clothing were stolen by the guards, there was great brutality and a lot of the men were injured. A number of the refugees are utterly destitute in Australia without even a brush or a comb and with only the clothes they left England in, now ragged.

Sworn statements are being prepared, and it is hoped to secure justice and prevent the sailing of further prison ships with a similar guard. It is expected that a question will be asked in the House. Such treatment would be unjustifiable for prisoners of war, but when it is remembered that the majority of these internees are friendly victims of Nazi oppression, it seems that, in spite of the urgency of affairs last summer, the Government has been seriously negligent in staffing their ships.—Yours faithfully,

E. H. PEASE.

Oxford Fitzpaine, Dorset.

A committee has been set up on the initiative of the London and National Society for Women's Service and its Junior Council, the Women's Employment Federation, the Council of Women Civil Servants and the National Association of Women Civil Servants to promote the establishment of a memorial to the work of the late Mrs. Oliver Strachey. It is suggested that this memorial should take the form of a fund for the preservation and development of the unique library on women's life and work of which Mrs. Strachey was one of the founders. Donations should be sent to Lord Cecil, c/o Miss Watts, 13-14 Dartmouth Street, Westminster, S.W. 1.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### "A Shaming Record"

The countryside, I think, can supply a comment or two on "the shaming record" of the appalling road-accident figures for December. One of those comments concerns that most persistent road offender, the country workman on the bicycle. Knocking off in winter just before twilight, he can invariably be found, in the deadliest period just before darkness, trying to make home without any kind of light on his machine at all. Later, in darkness, the cyclist on remote country roads has another lamp-saving trick—that of riding without a light so long as the road is empty and of switching on suddenly at the approach of a car. Both practices are highly dangerous, both can have the most unerving effect on the motorist, and both are everyday occurrences in the country. But country roads are now filled with an entirely new class of motorist: the Army driver. Using fast vehicles, independent of petrol rationing, travelling mostly in strange country, the average Army driver sets a new low standard of driving. Every day one sees examples of Army driving on narrow and dangerous country roads that make the civilian driver despair. Is it possible that Army standards of road responsibility are not high enough? In a recent case a soldier allowed his lorry to be driven, in the black-out, by a civilian; the civilian promptly knocked down a lamp-post, four people, and killed a child. The soldier was "severely reprimanded."

### Raasdonders

A Dutch correspondent (or a correspondent with strong Dutch sympathies) sends me details of a "highly nourishing, well-flavoured food" of which, at least as a food, I have not heard before. This is none other than tares, which is described as having been used as human food in England "perhaps even less than a hundred years ago," when "the Dutch imported them from this country and grew them for human consumption." All this is news to me, but my correspondent goes on to tell how "any naval man of the Koninklijke Marine will tell you they are eaten on board the Dutch warships twice a week (*raasdonders* we call them) and that they are found to be a treat for any visitor who is invited to have lunch in their mess." This sounds convincing enough, but whether the conservative English public can be persuaded to emulate this naval cud-chewing is perhaps another matter. My correspondent omits to say how *raasdonders* are cooked. In the hands of Dutch cooks I have no doubt some tares are excellent, but in the hands of the English there is a good chance that they might remain, I fear, just a bit of fodder. There are many Dutch folk in England now—perhaps one of them can give us a recipe for *raasdonders*?

### Wild Daphne

Reports of the localities in which *Daphne mezereum* grows wild have been few—but rather because of the rareness of correspondents, I fear, than of localities. But it is interesting to hear of it from three counties: Wiltshire, Hampshire and Staffordshire. In the first it is evidently so rare that its station is a hushed secret between natural history societies and a few local enthusiasts; in the second it was found in 1935 but, alas, had disappeared three years later. Only in Staffordshire does it seem to be at all plentiful. There, in certain districts (which for obvious reasons I shall not name) it grows "wild all through the woods." Only one correspondent gives any idea of the type of soil in which it is found. "This is the Wiltshire correspondent, who describes it as growing in "very wet ground." To my surprise there are no new reports of it from Kent, which is reported to possess more species of wild flower than any other county.

### In the Garden

If onions are once again to be the scarcest winter vegetable it is a fairly safe bet that tomatoes will be the scarcest of all market produce during the coming summer. At this time in 1940 excellent Canary tomatoes were selling at eightpence a pound; this year the only tomatoes available are English hot-house at one-and-sixpence each. This is a clear warning, I think, that every gardener should plan to grow at least six times, and if possible ten times, the quantity of tomatoes he grows in a normal year. Even this is not too much. Tomatoes are absurdly easy to raise from seed (an average sixpenny packet should produce about fifty plants) in a temperature of 60 degrees or 65 degrees; or seedlings (quite commonly sterilised) are already available at eight shillings a hundred. These are, of course, only for those growers who can maintain an indoor temperature of about 65 degrees. But later there is no reason at all why tomatoes should not be grown outdoors, in rows, like beans or potatoes. Fifty per cent. of the fruit of such plants will ripen on the plants, and will be of finer flavour than those grown indoors; the remaining fifty per cent. may be ripened, in successive batches, in boxes of hay. Handled correctly, they will continue ripening until Christmas. Thus it should be possible for even the most modest grower to produce fruit from July to December. Incidentally more fruit is obtainable by using the twin-stem method of culture—i.e., of allowing two main stems, instead of one, to every plant.

H. E. BATES.

mere majority in the infinitely more complicated circumstances of India.

This is eminently a case in which a careful and thoughtful approach to the problem to be solved leads to a reversal of those first impressions which, however generous in their origin and intentions, may prove to be based on a false analogy and a misapprehension of the real facts of the situation.—Yours faithfully, H. HAROLD PORTER.

Fossedene, Mount Pleasant, Cambridge.

### "THE CASE OF THE U.D.F."

Sir,—“When I use a word,” said Humpty-Dumpty, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less. . . .” “Partisan!” says the Northern Ireland Minister for Public Security, invoking “those with a knowledge of Irish affairs” (although Stormont Castle is the last place to find any with a knowledge of Irish, as distinct from Ulster, affairs). I prefer to invoke those with a knowledge of the English language and to leave my article to speak for itself. By his strange linguistic convention the Minister doubtless hoped to discredit the main theme of my article on the U.D.F. This was an enquiry into the wisdom and legality of using the Police Forces of Northern Ireland as a Defence Force; but the Minister has carefully avoided all reference to this aspect of the matter. I challenge him to disprove my thesis that his Government’s action is illegal and unconstitutional.

My article is dubbed “partisan” because I said that “all who desired the Union of Ireland in opposition to the Northern Government were branded as potential Fifth Columnists.” But a statement of fact cannot so easily be set aside. Will Mr. MacDermott deny that this was the clear meaning behind the late Lord Craigavon’s statement of May 22nd?

As I was at some pains to explain, the fears and suspicions which I dealt with are not confined to any one political party or section of the community, but are found even in the ranks of the U.D.F. itself. Will Mr. MacDermott tell us why the widespread demand among the Defence Volunteers to be taken over by the military has not been met? If, as he seems to imply, the British military authorities have refused to take over control, that still does not legalise his Government’s action. His letter, if anything, confirms my suspicion that the legal and constitutional issues have never been referred to the competent authority in London.

Having ignored my main points, Mr. MacDermott concentrates his attack on the suggestion that the Northern Ireland Government took advantage of the invasion threat to add to the strength of its own forces. His contention fails because it is an undeniable fact that his Government did expand its Special Constabulary under the threat of invasion—with what ulterior motive, if any, is beside the point.

Mr. MacDermott says “it is impossible to raise an effective armed force quickly without an administrative basis to work upon,” and goes on to say that the Territorial Army Associations provided that basis in Great Britain, but that Northern Ireland, lacking such an organisation, was forced to use the U.S.C. as the only alternative. The excuse is palpably specious, for the very good reason that the T.A. Associations were not used to raise the L.D.V. in Britain and only came into the picture some time after its inception. The initial enrolment and organisation of the L.D.V. proved that, in Britain, it was possible to raise an armed force without any existing administrative basis to work upon. That the Stormont Government deemed it impossible in Northern Ireland is eloquent of the dangerous lack of sympathy between that Government and the people they rule.

For the rest, Mr. MacDermott’s letter amounts to little more than an endorsement of my statement that, in practice, the U.D.F. is training and working with the Army rather than the Police. His silence on the larger issues is significant.—Yours faithfully,

8 Wellington Park, Belfast.

DONALD TAYLOR.

### THE S.S. ‘DUNERA’

Sir,—In his letter describing the treatment of a Sherborne deportee, Mr. E. H. Pease accuses the captain, officers, crew and guards on board the s.s. ‘Dunera’ of grossly inhuman behaviour. May I suggest that, for the sake of their own good name and the peace of mind of their friends and relatives who may possibly have read Mr. Pease’s letter, these men should be given an opportunity of clearing themselves of these charges?—Yours faithfully,

21 Perne Road, Cambridge.

EDITH R. WALKER.

[An inquiry into the facts regarding the ‘Dunera’ has been promised in Parliament.—Ed., *The Spectator*.]

### TICKETS FOR FIRE WATCHERS

Sir,—The railway companies are refusing to issue workmen’s tickets to night fire-watchers proceeding to their duties in the evening. I have taken up the matter with the Ministry of Transport, who refuse to intervene. It seems to me that the attitude of the railway companies is contrary to public policy, and particularly unwise at a time when they are operating under Government guarantee.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. W. YOKALL.

The Conde Nast Publications, Ltd., 1 New Bond Street, W. 1.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Swan Battle

Six swans, two parents and four cygnets, ruled the lake all summer. At the first sign of severe frost six strange adult birds appeared from the direction of the coast. The lake was almost entirely sealed with black smooth ice, but there began in the morning a great battle for possession, which reached its height in the afternoon. Taking off from the north shore, the strange swans repeatedly made savage power-dives of a hundred yards, dashing madly at the defending birds. The end of each power-dive was a great slithering skid, sometimes on the feet, sometimes on the breast of the bird. Occasionally, unable to take off again, the birds struggled furiously to make contact with each other, spreading their wings, flopping on the ice, and then rowing themselves along, fierce, hissing, rather comic. Sometimes they tired of it and retreated, as if to plan fresh strategy. Presently the cygnets rose and flew far up the lake and found a stretch of ice-free water. Soon the strange birds were in pursuit and the battle began again, a series of pursuit flights now, ending at last in the same floundering crash-dives on the ice. This struggle for possession went on all that day. But in the morning the two swans and the four cygnets were still there, serenely breaking the thinner edges of ice with their breasts, and I could hear the thin cries of the raiders as they flew away above the winter mist, turning outward towards the coast again.

### More Uncommon Vegetables

Several correspondents have asked for more details of the asparagus pea, which I mentioned on December 27th. Miss Eleanor Sinclair Robde, who has often written of uncommon vegetables, is one of the very few seedsmen to offer seed of this pea. She offers other interesting varieties—the Jersey bean, a stringless cottager’s bean from the Channel Islands, a pea-bean, a purple-podded pea, and a carmine-podded bean, almost lost to cultivation, described as the Robin bean. In addition to these little-known beans, an advertisement in *The Spectator* of last week offered honey-beans. It is not generally known, I think, that tomatoes may also be had in many uncommon forms. In addition to the golden-skinned varieties, it is now possible to get varieties resembling plums, pears and peaches, or growing in bunches of small fruit, like currants, or layer fruits, like grapes. All these, excellent for salads, respond to ordinary tomato cultivation.

### Medicinal Herbs

No paragraph of mine has created more interest, I think, than that in which, late last summer, I gave some details of the current prices of medicinal herbs. The year was too old and the blitz too vigorously young to enable possible collectors of herbs to have much luck. Among other misfortunes, the wholesale herbalists, Brome and Schimmer, were bombed out and their stock destroyed. Ever since that time correspondents, from as far away as Kenya and South Africa, have written to ask for details of how to gather herbs and dispose of them and to inquire if Messrs. Brome and Schimmer are still in existence. I am glad to say that they are in existence, trading vigorously and paying occasional cheques, I believe, to enterprising *Spectator* readers. Very shortly I hope to give their new address and some idea of their current requirements and prices. Meanwhile it should be remembered that there exists this year an excellent opportunity not merely to gather herbs, but to cultivate them. Many are annuals of simple cultivation, seeds of which may be bought from most regular catalogues.

### In the Garden

Many gardeners, like myself, see no practical purpose in trying to grow mixed borders of flowers and vegetables, but where flower beds are cleared twice a year there is no reason why flowers and vegetables should not be grown as successive crops. Some suggested combinations: Early potatoes (plant March), followed by scarlet salvia (plant June); early carrots (sow March), followed by a late sowing of nemasias (June); early lettuce (March and April), followed by dahlias (plant June); alternating: late tulips, such as the magnificent Breder and Mendel types as a change from Darwinis (plant now), followed by late potatoes, carrots or leeks (early June); spring-sown annuals, of which the varieties are endless (March), followed by late turnips (August) or spring cabbage (September). It would be even possible, I think, to plan for three crops. For example: polyanthus (plant now), followed by early potatoes (late April), followed by outdoor chrysanthemums (transplanted from nursery bed in August). Meanwhile spring leaps forward. Snowdrops, crocuses of many species, heaths, aconites, grape hyacinths, primulae and primroses all bloom. Wild violets emerge from under snow. The temptation to be incautious, to make a sowing of carrots, beans, potatoes, onions and lettuces under glass, should not be resisted. For seeds, capture and save heat in the greenhouse by means of a forcing frame. In this way a temperature of 60-70 degrees can be easily maintained within a confined area by a minimum expense of fuel.

H. E. BATES.

normal domestic preoccupations of life on the screen—a murder in the first case and an impending divorce in the other. Nevertheless, both films are worth seeing. In fact, *The Road to Frisco* is two pictures to be seen for the price of one; and the second and more conventional section is redeemed by a very remarkable piece of acting by Ida Lupino. It is the beginning of the film, however, that reminds us for fleeting moments of the masterpieces of cinema. Here we are on our way across the United States in the tracks of *The Covered Wagon* and *The Iron Horse*, but this time we thunder along the kind of concrete highway we remember from *The Grapes of Wrath*. Our companions are long-distance truck drivers—"road slobbers"—in the persons of George Raft and Humphrey Bogart. Director Raoul Walsh has set a cracking pace (no bothering with tedious continuity scenes), and the dialogue is the best we have heard for a long while. The wise-cracks sound as if they really might have come from the truck-drivers' road-side cafes. For a while all goes well with the film. We begin to appreciate that the truck-drivers' job is drama ready-made. These men are fighting a battle for existence which is new to the screen. They are fighting against the exploitation of freighting contractors and finance companies, and the enforced competition of other free-lance, truck-owning drivers like themselves. Finally, after long nights on the road, the fight becomes a dazed struggle against sheer exhaustion, so that they may carry enough loads to pay off the instalments on their trucks before the debt-collector takes them. The troubles of the "road-slobbers" are perhaps over-luridly presented, but because these men are real human beings, and their economic circumstances are intelligible, the film begins to take on the excitement of a new, authentic story. Even Ann Sheridan, as a waitress, fits very competently into place. And then, while there is still a chance that this may be the great film about long-distance lorry drivers which is going to be made one day, the scene changes and the road is forgotten. Realism has had its innings. George Raft and Humphrey Bogart find cushy stay-at-home jobs, and are soon involved with Ida Lupino in a murder and a court scene to wind up the picture. The end of the film has no significant connexion with the trucking business or the road to San Francisco.

*The Man I Married* suffers to a lesser extent from the same fault. Here the realistic background is Nazi Germany just before the crisis of 1938. Joan Bennett and Francis Lederer play the parts of a married couple on a visit to Germany with their small son. The wife is an American and the husband a German, who plans shortly to take out naturalisation papers in the United States. The wife is revolted by what she sees of Nazism, but her husband is converted, and the family breaks up. Too late he discovers that he is half-Jewish, and that he has lost, not only his wife, but also the strictly Aryan love of his new Nazi girl-friend (played by Anna Sten). We finally leave the husband weeping inconsolably for shame because he is a Jew. Meanwhile his wife and small son are being seen off to America by a friendly American journalist (excellently played by Lloyd Nolan), who has been trying all along to explain to Joan Bennett what it is all about, and how the Nazis win friends and influence people. But Joan Bennett and almost everybody else connected with the film are apparently more interested in whether the erring husband is really in love with the Nazi girl-friend, and consequently the plot gets into a tangle of improbabilities which seems a poor outcome from a promising idea. The film is, however, exciting in its melodramatic fashion, and a strong piece of anti-Nazi propaganda. It makes also, consciously or unconsciously, a worthwhile propaganda point of a less obvious kind; it strikes a shrewd blow at present nationalistic trends in all countries by putting forward the reasonable proposition that such diseases are powerful enough even to convert a Jew to anti-semitism.

EDGAR ANSTLEY.

## COURAGE

Wit of the eternal future will read  
Of the dead when they were prepossessed with death  
Will judge by what they did not what they said  
The hour the minute the moment the last breath.

Prepare now the cause for a decent action  
Manipulate the plot towards the crime  
The personal crisis in the national situation  
The prison the wall the bandage and the lime.

Swing the emotion to the heroic pitch  
Then whip the fleshy horse over the deadly ditch.

EMYR HUMPHREYS.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Bird Watching

If anyone should have been surprised to hear that curiosity about birds was something of a modern phenomenon I would advise him to spend sixpence on a new Pelican, *Watching Birds*, by James Fisher, secretary to the British Trust for Ornithology, of which I hope to say something more another week. There he will find the bird-lover's case, in its aesthetic, biological, economic, historical and various other aspects, so admirably put that I think it can hardly be overpraised. About twenty and twenty-five times as expensive, yet by no means proportionately important, the late R. G. Walsmsley's *Winged Company* (Eyre and Spottiswoode) and Richard Perry's *Lundy, Isle of Puffins* (Lindsay Drummond) are admirable supplements, both more specialised in subject, the one dealing with 150 British birds, the other mostly with guillemots, kittiwakes, razorbills, cormorants and puffins. Both have just appeared. In Mr. Perry the modern attitude is seen to perfection: patience, exactitude, keen and tireless documentation, and a fine sensibility, reflected in some excellent prose. Mr. Perry also scores with some first-class pictures, the only point on which Mr. Fisher's book may be said, perhaps inevitably at the price, to fail.

### Bird Facts

I cannot resist a lucky dip into some of the facts given for the general reader in *Watching Birds*. Like flowers, birds interest the most unexpected people; and so "Among those I know are a Prime Minister, a Secretary of State, a charwoman, two policemen, two kings, one ex-king, five Communists, one Fascist, two Labour, one Liberal and six Conservative Members of Parliament, the chairman of a County Council, several farm labourers earning thirty shillings a week, a rich man who earns four or five times that amount in every hour of the day, and at least forty-six schoolmasters." The number of species of birds in the world is quite small: only twenty-eight thousand, as opposed to three-quarters of a million insects, to which entomologists add another ten thousand each year. (There are about 200,000 species of flowering plants.) A swan may have twenty-five bones in the neck—a giraffe only seven. The most destructive bird in England is (as often pointed out in this column) the wood-pigeon; the most beneficial the robin.

### Poultry Rationing

A very aggrieved poultry farmer reports a farcical state of affairs under the new poultry-food rationing scheme. After obeying the original Government suggestion that poultry-keepers should kill off most of their older laying birds, only to find the acutest shortage of eggs ever known as the result, she found herself with something over two hundred birds. For these she received twenty coupons. She was therefore a little astonished, when comparing notes with other poultry-keepers in the local market, to find not only that this ratio was nowhere consistent at all, but that one farmer, with twenty birds, had one thousand coupons. Country markets are excitable places, and it is just possible that a sense of grievance has inflated these figures a little. But, even allowing for that, this remains a strange manifestation of the official mind. But the postscript is stranger. To the protest of the poultry-keeper that poultry-keeping was becoming an impossible, if not farcical, thing, the officials had a most comforting answer: "We suggest," they said, "that you keep cows instead."

### In the Garden

There are at least half a dozen substitutes for the onion. Of these leeks are, of course, best known, and have been celebrated as a vegetable for centuries. For flavouring, chives have all the taste but none of the after-whiff that has surrounded the onion, in England, with what was once called a certain Cranfordian atmosphere, and its mauve heads of flowers are as charming as sea-pink. Cibbals, once a cottage favourite, is a kind of evergreen chives and therefore useful for winter. No one needs an introduction to shallots, which it is now time to plant; but the tree-onion, which grows small bulbs on both stem and root, is a little-known variety. Nor is the so-called Welsh onion well known. Introduced into England in the early seventeenth century, it is a native of Siberia—a kind of perennial leek, with tubular leaves, the small side-leeks being picked as required, while the main plant is left to grow on. There is also a Japanese form, Nebuka, said to be excellent.

H. E. BATES.



## COUNTRY LIFE

had nothing on our right flank. The Austrians told us afterwards that, half-starved as they were, they would have held out indefinitely against the Italians, whom they despised, but that they had little heart to fight against us. Be that as it may, the Italians played their part and a very important part in the battle. They ferried the H.A.C. and the R.W.F. across to the island in face of machine-gun fire and later, despite almost insuperable difficulties, succeeded in throwing a pontoon bridge across from our side to the island after our own engineers had done their gallant best and failed.

"Few foreigners," writes Padre Cross, "have rendered greater service to the British Army than Captain Odini and his 'pontieri' on the nights of October 23rd to 26th. His answer when thanked by the Divisional General is worth recording. 'My boatmen,' he replied, 'say that they would be prepared to take your soldiers anywhere.'"

It is particularly sad for those of us who were on the Italian Front in 1917-18 to think that our gay and gallant allies of those days are now our enemies. May I express a hope that your readers will lend no encouragement to the fashionable habit of disparaging the Italians? Such a practice gives little credit to the valour of our troops who do not themselves stoop to it, and is unworthy of our British traditions. Let us remember that, like the Austrians, the Italians have little heart to fight against us and may that with the overthrow of the murderer of Matteotti we may see the rebirth of a liberal Italy with whom we may resume our traditional friendship and go forward together as collaborators in the shaping of a better world.—Yours faithfully,  
59 Harrington Gardens, S.W.7. G. F. STANLEY JACKSON.

## 4,000 TONS OF BIRDS

SIR.—Mr. Bates's letter in your issue of February 7th prompts me to enlarge upon the subject of eating small birds from the purely statistical point of view. The breeding land-bird population of Great Britain is, every May, probably in the neighbourhood of 120 million—a figure which has been arrived at independently by two ornithologists. More than half of this is made up by only 29 species, mainly small birds—the largest being rook, wood-pigeon, jackdaw, moorhen, lapwing and partridge. Even if these larger birds be included, the total weight of all the individuals of these 29 species only just reaches over 4,000 tons. Probably half of a bird, by weight, can be used, since wing-muscles and legs are alone usually eaten in this country. So if all these birds were distributed evenly over the human population of Great Britain, everybody would get 1½ (or perhaps a scrap more) ounces each, provided that all of them could be caught.

It will be noted that partridges are included—a pointer to the tiny place that game takes in our national larder; and to the fact that (for instance) sport is the only excuse for shooting the partridge, and the protection of crops the only excuse for shooting the wood-pigeon. I am not suggesting that these excuses are not satisfactory ones—personally I think that they are admirable; but let us have none of this nonsense about contribution to the national food.—Yours, &c.,  
School House, Oundle, Peterborough. JAMES FISHER.

## THE PIPER HERESIES

SIR.—I did not accuse Mr. Williams-Ellis of indifference to the claims of Regency and Georgian buildings: nor, having read several of his excellent books on architecture, was I in the least startled to hear that he had signed the Carlton House Terrace petition, but merely confirmed in my estimate of his admirable good taste. The point which I wished to make was that the ruthless restoration carried out by the Office of Works causes a very small historical gain at a great aesthetic loss.

Mr. Williams-Ellis says that the Office of Works is both thorough and discreet in its restoration. Thorough it certainly is, but hardly discreet, unless to restore a building discreetly involves putting down neat little suburban lawns and gravel paths, with here and there a flower-bed planted with geraniums, Lobelias and London pride; installing a turnstile and putting up cast-iron railings in the best St. Pancras Gothic; and permitting the erection of a corrugated iron shanty where "bus-loads of trippers (no doubt exhausted by the strain of so much historical research) can refresh themselves with doughnuts and fizzy lemonade; in fact, to turn the place into a kind of Hampstead Heath. It might be better to allow the building to crumble away than to expose it to so undignified an end.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
Bathol College, Oxford. J. A. GERE.

## VENISON SAUSAGE

SIR.—In your issue of January 17th, 1941, Mr. H. E. Bates, in the "Country Life" column asks for enlightenment upon the appearance and subsequent fate of the venison sausage. Last winter, in Edinburgh, and during the present season until the recent severe weather, we were able to buy regular quantities of this excellent war-time introduction. Venison sausages make an extremely tasty supper dish, either when fried and served with mashed potatoes or when covered with a light batter and baked in the oven, giving an entirely new flavour to the "road in the hole"—I am, Sir, yours sincerely,  
29 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh. E. B. V. SLOAN.

## Shrove Tuesday

Shrove Tuesday, originally a day of shiving and confession, became for many centuries the strangest and most boisterous day in the English calendar. In the North it was a great day for eating: eggs, collops or slices of fried bacon, mutton, ham, baked apples, and of course pancakes; in the Eastern Counties buns and doughnuts were made, and at Norwich a small currant loaf, known, I believe, as a coquille; in Cornwall children begged for "Colpura," indicating money, but apparently a corruption of two Cornish words meaning a slice of bread. It was a day also of peculiar importance to apprentices and journeymen, who would ring the Pancake bells of churches (notably at York Minster, where the custom was finally stopped in the face of violent opposition), and afterwards take part in various forms of barbaric horseplay, wild games of communal football, the rounding up of light lads, and the disgusting cock-fighting and cock-throwing. Fairs were held, dice were thrown, schoolmasters were barred out of school, people who overslept were swept out of bed with brooms, eggs were rolled in fields, citizens were publicly whipped, young gentlemen at expensive schools tore each other to pieces for the sake of a pancake—in short, a good time was had by all before Lent put up the shutters.

## Storm Colour

Almost any year, on a day in February, snow-clouds of indigo blue come up from the North and thick beyond the hills in the late afternoon while the sun is still strong in the South-West. Suddenly the stark light is unreal. Gulls turning above the deep brown ploughed land have the pure brilliancy of snow-birds, the young corn flames up, the young beans are as blue as steel. And there is a sudden miraculous revelation of spring in the trees and on the woodland distances. Beech and poplar and willow and elm and even oak smoulder with strong reflected light on swollen sap buds; birch and hawthorn and alder are like clouds of smoky maroon-brown; catkins of hazel seem suspended in air, branchlets, like candles of honey. The chance breast of a chaffinch flashes with tropical splendour and geese stand against the raw emerald grass like birds of porcelain. And along every hedgerow the horns of willow-urum are like bright green glass, and every fattening claret hawthorn bud is pinpricked with cream.

## Mole Catching

The news that ten million moleskins are needed for export will recall the days when, during and after the last war, mole-catching was one of the most profitable of country crafts. Pelts fetched high prices; a man and a boy could trap hundreds of moles in a week, skinning and pegging out the pelts in the intervals of trapping. At the price of pelts declined, trapping in many districts ceased altogether, with the result that thousands of acres of pasture now look as if scarred by the upheavals of tiny bombs. Those who plan to do a little amateur mole-catching should not be deluded into thinking that a molehill is the place to catch a mole. Moles work along certain regular tunnels, from which they make brief branch-excursions in search of food, without which it is said they cannot survive for more than four hours. Once that main tunnel is discovered—most often by a hedge, where soil is dry and light and workable—moles can be trapped with ease as they pass up and down. A good mole-trapper knows that passage, as he opens it, by the way footprints have padded it continually down. Skins will now fetch threepence to fivepence each; during the last war the price was at one time, I believe, as high as ninepence.

## In the Garden

Melons are normally regarded in England as luxury food, and the price in the late summer of 1940 rarely fell, in London shops, below six or seven shillings for small fruit. Yet melons are, in my experience, as simply grown as cucumbers. Gardening books accompany their instructions with the usual elaborate talk about strong hot-beds, intensive fertilisation, and so on. I find that melons of the cantaloupe variety grow and yield excellent medium-sized fruit if germinated in strong bottom heat and subsequently grown on in frames. Seeds should be set two in a three-inch pot and will germinate in a short time, and can then be grown on in a temperature which should not fall below 60 degrees at night. Planted out in May on hummocks of warm, fine soil in frames where manure will retain a little heat they will grow rapidly. Fertilisation must be done by hand, but in my experience fruit will set naturally if the plants are regularly sprayed in the late afternoon with tepid water. Most of this instruction is a modification of the strict rules of text-books, which always seem to regard melon-culture as a special prerogative of millionaires. Yet this simple method grew for me in 1940 an average of fifteen excellent rosy, fragrant cantaloupes per frame.

H. E. BATES.



conclusion that "*Ex Africa semper aliquid novae*." She now knows exactly how Pitt felt when he rolled up the map of Europe in 1806.

The child of today is already re-writing past history in a language which proves its reality to her. King Alfred no longer "reorganised the fyrd," but "called up the Home Guard"; Bazaine's surrender at Metz is recorded as a success for the "Fifth Column," and Napoleon's Grand Duchy of Warsaw becomes "French-occupied Poland." The English Protestants foresee in Mary Tudor's proposed marriage with Spain the dangers of "peaceful penetration," the subtle implications underlying the "protection" of the smaller country by the larger. It was difficult, before the war, to convince a child that Wellington's campaign in Spain had any bearing upon the European situation; Madrid was a long way from Wagram and South Africa from London. Now the service of Greece to the Allied cause is understood and unquestioned: the similarity of circumstances is easily recognised. We who have seen the surrender of Leopold of the Belgians are no longer bewildered by the plight of Napoleon III at Sedan.

Truly it has taken a war and its preliminaries to transfer history from the unreal and imaginative atmosphere of the fairy story to that of grim reality: it is no longer a cultural entertainment but a necessity.—Yours faithfully,

KATHLEEN M. McRAE.  
Abbott's Hill, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

### THE FRIEND OF LAMB

SIR,—Thank you for sparing space in the columns of *The Spectator* for an article on "G. D." But did George Dyer really fall into the river at Islington as the writer states? There are several conflicting accounts of the famous episode—including one according to which Mary Lamb fished Dyer out of the stream with her parasol. Did not the whole incident originate in one of Charles Lamb's good stories—so good that it came to be accepted as the truth?

Dyer himself, when he read the essay "Oxford in the Vacation," deeply resented any false statements about others, but declared that he did not mind some merriment at his own expense, if this pleased Charles Lamb. Thus he would allow the story in *Amicus Redivivus* to pass without public challenge. But he did tell his intimate friends the real facts. William Frend, a most reliable witness, says that George Dyer denied to him that he walked into the stream. De Morgan claimed that the whole account had been fabricated by Lamb, who wanted material for the *London Magazine* and had a friend upon whose good nature he could absolutely rely. May it not have been really the heroic rescuer of *Amicus Redivivus* who actually walked into the stream after some festive occasion?—Yours, &c.,

T. BERNARD NUTTER.

"Hill Crest," Royston, Herts.

## THE CRY FOR HELP

Last month this page carried an appeal for some who are very badly hit by the war, and who deserve your help.

Have you responded to that appeal? If not will you be the true friend, and give the help now—when it is needed most?

Their need is very real, and loving thought for them will earn for you that happiness which can only be experienced by helping others.

GOVERNESSES'  
BENEVOLENT  
INSTITUTION



58 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.1

## COUNTRY LIFE

### The British Trust for Ornithology

Perhaps an organisation devoted largely to watching and counting birds and compiling reports from the resultant data would seem to have little appeal during war-time. Yet on agricultural grounds alone, I think, bird observation, intelligently and scientifically carried out, has a claim to be called work of national importance. The organisation which prompts these remarks is The British Trust for Ornithology. Formed seven years ago, it has conducted a series of field investigations that are all too little appreciated. This is reflected in the membership figures of the latest report, and it seems a strange and regrettable thing that this society should still possess less than the thousand members it feels are necessary for the successful continuance of its work. Its aims are simple, yet important—"to promote, organise, carry on and encourage, study and research and particularly field work for the advancement of knowledge in all branches of the Science of Ornithology, including the investigation of, and publication of reports on, the effect of bird life in regard to agriculture, horticulture, forestry and fisheries," and "permanently to preserve and protect lands and objects which by their natural features are suitable for the preservation and study of bird life and of fauna and flora generally." The Trust urgently needs, and of course deserves, more funds and more members (10s. yearly, £10 life membership), and I suggest all those who are interested should write to the secretary, James Fisher, British Trust for Ornithology, Zoological Society, Regent's Park, N.W. 8.

### Inquiries and Reports

It is not possible to give here much more than a summary of the Trust's field investigations over the past few years; but among the most interesting I find the inquiry into the distribution of the corn-crake (everywhere rapidly decreasing), the census of heronries (a slight decrease, but 10 per cent. higher than 1928), the inquiry into song-periods of various species, such as mistle thrush, song-sparrow, blackbird, chaffinch, yellow-hammer and skylark (less complete than it might have been because less than a quarter of the observers lived in the country), inquiries into the distribution of the woodcock, the fulmar, the bridled gull, the lapwing, the black-headed gull, the redshank, into woodland birds, the hatching and fledging period, and the local distribution and habitat of various species. An associated scheme for bird-ringing (headquarters, the Bird Room of the British Museum; also needing field workers) reported some interesting recoveries of ringed birds—notably a robin from South-Western France, a redstart and a winch from Portugal, and a great skua from Spain. Finally, it must be remarked that the Trust does not necessarily need scientific experts as members. "This is not the case. Any 'fit and proper person' of good behaviour who is interested in bird life is welcomed as a member regardless of the extent of his or her knowledge"—which means, I think, the readers of this page.

### Army Wastage

The scandal and problem of army food-wastage continues to be very serious in country-districts, where woods and hedgerows are convenient dumping-places for all kinds of unwanted rations. The following examples, taken from my own village, defy comment. One unit, leaving for another district, leaves two sacks of loaves by the roadside; in the garbage left by another is found a piece of beef weighing several pounds; a local pig-keeper, collecting army swill, discovers in one day's collection half a dozen sizable lumps of swill, each complete with kidney. Finally, during severe frost, when icy roads made driving difficult, loaves were laid down under the wheels of lorries so that better grip could be obtained. Yet the answer to any question about the quality of army food is always the same—good food, ruined by bad organisation and cooking. And the postscript to it all is the old story of continued rabbit-poaching and of chickens stolen by the dozen.

### In the Garden

There is a point at which an interest in uncommon vegetables ceases to be practical; but the wide interest shown by correspondents in previous lists of them prompts me to give a final dozen. In addition to the asparagus pea there is also an asparagus bean—pods a yard long but needing warm conditions for successful growth; pe-tsai is a Chinese cabbage of the Swiss Chard type; golden thistle resembles salsify; the lima bean is a short-podded bean, said to be very good, which does well in a warm summer; skirret and alexanders, both of honourable English kitchen-garden descent, are members of the cow-parsley family and also resemble salsify; the sweet potato is the root of a climbing convolvulus which also needs a favourable summer for success; the soya-bean can be used green or dried; Poke-weed, an annual raised from seed, resembles sweet-corn, is popular in America and has fans among epicures here; orache is a kind of spinach; cardoon, rampion and kohlrabi are all better known, though perhaps less known than they should be. Some of these might be tried in small quantities and are at any rate likely to be as valuable as the inevitable plots of cabbage.

H. E. BATES.

preserve it by violent means. That danger is removed. There will again be agreement as to the foundations of national life. This should ensure the sound working of democracy, provided the other essential is present—I mean the supply of a sufficient number of honest and capable men and women as leaders. It seemed possible, even likely, that all over the world there might be a return of conditions such as produced the wars of religion, lasting 150 years. Instead of that we shall, I believe, see Britain leading the way, as so often before, and showing that change, social, political and economic, can be made peacefully, without too great hardship to any, and by general agreement. There will still be extremists at either end, one lot clamouring for swifter progress, as the Radicals clamoured last century; the other lot trying to dig their toes in and keep things as they are. But that is human nature. That will not hinder the advance.—Yours faithfully,  
HAMILTON FYFE.

### THE B.B.C. AND "THE SPECTATOR"

SIR.—Sniping at the B.B.C. is a popular pastime. A rather easy one, too, because the number and variety of the B.B.C.'s activities offer so many targets. I agree with Mr. St. John Ervine. I heard the Mussolini broadcast in question and found nothing that was cheap, puerile or gratuitous, nor anything objectionable in the "sarcastic inflexions of the announcers' voices." If you, Sir, had been reading the same speech to your family circle, would you have intoned it in a level voice as though it were a Stock Exchange report? Or would its bombast and slowness and distortion have been reflected, even unconsciously, in your voice? If the B.B.C.'s report of the speech had been untruthful or distorted or unfair, they would be open to censure. But it was not; and as many thousands of listeners-in would not see any report of the speech in the Press, it was surely neither unfair nor unprofitable to convey it to them in such a way as to help their correct understanding of it. If the retort is that the B.B.C. may treat similarly a speech made, say, by a British politician, I can only say that I don't believe they would do so, and that, if they do, I will join the snipers. After all, Mussolini is our enemy, and a dirty, treacherous, lying gangster as well.

I suggest that the B.B.C.'s broadcast of the speech was not intended to be a textually complete report (what you call "straight news, pure and simple"), but was intended to be, and was in fact, a summary of the speech with occasional appropriate comment, even if the comment was conveyed only by an inflexion of the announcer's voice.

I am not much of a listener-in to the B.B.C. programmes, because I am not personally interested in the larger part of them. But other people are; and my firm belief is that the B.B.C. discharge a duty of great complexity and enormous difficulty with astonishing success.—Yours faithfully,  
HERBERT WORSLEY.

Little Gregories, Theydon Bois, Essex.

### GENERAL WAVELL'S WAR

SIR.—I was interested to see your comment on Mr. Orwell's review of General Wavell's *Alhambra* for December. A paragraph on the subject is appearing in the Editorial Comment of the March *Horizon*, but to those of your readers who do not see it, I should like to point out that Mr. Orwell's review was written last summer, soon after Dunkirk, and then held over several months through lack of space. Mr. Orwell in a controversy knows how to look after himself, but he might not care to make a point about this "co-incidence" which would incriminate his dilatory editor.—Yours, &c.,  
CYRIL CONNOLLY.

6 Selwyn House, 2 Lansdowne Terrace, W.C.1.

[The point of our comment was Mr. Orwell's estimate of General Wavell. The question whether that estimate was formed in June or in November seems hardly material.—Ed., *The Spectator*.]

### "THREE SCORE MILES AND TEN"

SIR.—Mr. Graham Greene, in a recent issue, extracted so much humour from what I had never thought to be more than a rather prosaic little handbook on *Colloquial Persian* that I feel it would be ungracious to carp or criticise. But I really must rebuke him for inattention to his studies; for if he had learnt Lesson 9 properly, he would have known that 1294 is only the Iranian equivalent of 1915 A.D.—there are no Iranian centenaries as yet. Might I also add that the price is 3s. 6d., the publishers Messrs. Kegan Paul, and the author, your humble servant,  
L. P. ELWELL-SUTTON.  
P.O. Box 6, Evesham, Worcs.

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## COUNTRY LIFE

### The Land Drainage Problem

Long before the war I drew attention in this column to the hopeless state of land-drainage in England; now a correspondent, who as a partner in a famous firm of estate-agents knows more than most of us about land values, sends me details of a scheme by which he believes the agricultural drainage problem could be simply and quickly solved. Talk to any farmer about land-drainage schemes, and he has one reply: an essential thing, yes, but what about the money and, more important, the labour? In spite of the 50 per cent. grant, my correspondent declares that the greater number of farmers and landowners "still hesitate because they yet have to find the money as soon as the work is completed or else run the risk of having their land charged"; yet the total cost of dealing with 20 per cent. of our 20,000,000 acres of arable and pasture would, at £10 per acre, require only one-tenth of the sum raised in War Weapons Week. The labour problem, too, he believes, could be simply solved, since it is not recurrent. One huge effort and a job is completed that will last for years. So there should be a land army formed in each district by the co-operation of the labour exchanges and the Army services, and directed by the Regional Commissioner. The successful operation of this scheme would depend, of course, on the length of red tape unravelled; but that has nothing to do with my correspondent. Meanwhile I have not seen any large drainage schemes in operation, though I have no doubt they exist; whereas the clay lands of the Kentish Weald, a few days ago, looked as if they were part of a vast irrigation-scheme.

### Tender Lily

An interesting example of frost-resistance has been provided by *Lilium Sulphureum*. Text-books recommend it as a greenhouse lily, rather tender, with possible chances of success in Cornwall, where its glorious yellow-throated, pink-touched blossoms are said to flower on stems of eight or ten feet in September or October. Ignoring all those rules by flowering in the open rock-garden, at a height of three feet, in late August, *Lilium Sulphureum* got no coddling from me.

Like the common tiger-lily, it throws off small fat bulbils at the leaf-axils, and these, as they ripened and fell in autumn, were gathered, nursed like invalids through the winter and might well have perished from kindness. In mine they were forgotten, buried under great snows, seared by intense frosts, and not discovered again till spring. Far from having perished, they were then as fat as butter-larks, a rich rum-colour, and bravely sprouting roots. So much, I thought, for text-books, and promptly put a potential five pounds' worth of rare bulbs to bed.

### Unfriendly South

Is it true that country people, and especially south country people, are unfriendly? I picked up a soldier, dead-tired, carrying full kit, at the end of a journey which he had begun at half-past four in the morning. He was surprised, he said, to get a lift at all; he was staggered to be asked home for a drink and a sandwich. Coming from the north, where cinema seats were half-price for serving men and where "bus-conductors were for some reason always without change and where people said good-morning as naturally as they breathed, he had found himself facing a brick wall of dumb indifference in the south. It was hard to get a lift, harder still to get a good-morning, hardest of all to make friends. To live in a millionaire's mansion and hang his overcoat on walls where Rembrandt had formerly been was no compensation. He had driven a motor-bike thousands of miles throughout the winter over roads as tough and frozen as they could be, but not one was as tough or frozen as the distant indifference of the people. What he and others wanted was quite simple—kindliness, a friendly hello, a taste of home and fire-side. They rarely got it. "Come again," I said, and he shied away like a nervous horse—didn't want to trouble us, didn't want to bother folks, didn't want to put us about. But he came and we felt happy to have broken the legend of southern unfriendliness for at least one man.

### In the Garden

If there are to be flowers this summer—and they are infinitely preferable to lawns dug up and exclusively planted with lettuce—they should be varieties which, as it were, pay large dividends. Petunias, *phlox drummondii*, zinnias and the new tobacco hybrid will give immense returns, and should be sown in frame or greenhouse now. In my experience petunias—seed of which should not be covered with soil—are the finest of all annuals. Sown in March they will bloom immediately they are planted out in May, and will never need another moment of attention until pulled up in November. Plants of *Lavender Queen*, an excellent dwarf variety, reached a diameter of four feet with me in the summer of 1940. In certain angles of light the flowers of *Flaming Velvet* were a glorious black. Both varieties, together with the old *Rose of Heaven*, were also sweet-scented—a fact perhaps little known. For zinnias, which some people find difficult, there is only one rule to be remembered. If sown before April they need heat.

H. E. BATES.

printed from Procter's *Autobiographical Fragment and Biographical Notes*, edited by Coventry Patmore, but the same story is to be found in his *Charles Lamb: A Memoir* (1869) at page 185. The testimony of Procter, and of Lamb himself—together with the fact of their friend's notorious absentmindedness—leaves no reasonable doubt that "G. D." actually fell into the New River.—Yours faithfully,

DEREK HUDSON.

Vann House, Ockley, Surrey.

## B.B.C. REPORTING

SIR,—Mr. Herbert Worsley defends the B.B.C. report of Mussolini's recent speech. Emphatically, I do not. "Janus" is perfectly right—after the B.B.C. commentary (not news in any sense of the word) I said to my wife: "What did Mussolini say?" I agree that Mussolini is all Mr. Worsley says, and more! But, we can only get the gist of what he thinks by hearing what he says—a vastly different thing to the construction someone in London puts upon the statements. After all, that "someone" is equally coloured by the expressed enmity of Mr. Worsley to Mussolini.—Yours faithfully,

HERBERT C. ROBINSON.

Ballyhoo, Hextol Crescent, Hexham, Northumberland.

## "ESCAPE"

SIR,—I have not seen the volume of drawings of Campden by F. L. Griggs, which is noticed by Mr. Graham Greene in your issue of March 14th, though I have been familiar with the originals for many years. However, I do not wish to quarrel with Mr. Greene's dismissal of these drawings as "not of wide interest." As an art-critic of proved taste and well-known experience, he is, of course, entitled to his opinion. But I must quarrel with his estimate of the work that Griggs did in Campden. I have known the town since 1916 and I knew Griggs from 1918 until his death. His motive was not solely to "conserve." He believed that this industrial world was in a bad way, and he believed also, as did William Morris, that it must be worse before it could be better. What he wanted to conserve, through this bad period and the worse period to come, was everything of the past which might be of service to the better future in which he fervently believed.

Mr. Greene's notice is headed "Escape." Griggs sought no escape from the problem with which he was faced. The struggle to solve it all but ruined him and quite certainly shortened his life. His own house, which Mr. Greene mentions—it is now the property of Sir Frank Brangwyn—is a glorious failure. He wanted it to be a proof that the best which has been done in the past can still be done by those who will take the trouble. In many ways it does provide that proof, and to that extent it is a glorious success. What is wrong with it is due to the fact that he had had no experience of domestic architecture on such a scale, so that this was, from the point of view of practical detail, a first, fine, eventually care-laden rapture. When it came to the adaptation of an old Cotswold house to modern needs he was first-rate in a practical way, and there is at least one small house in Campden which shows that he could be practical from the foundations up.

To return to his own house, his great and finally fatal profession of faith in his own ideals, let me say that he and I were often at outs about it. He did admit that irrelevant circumstances had sometimes forced his hand in the building. But, in spite of what Mr. Greene may say, he did equip it with electric light and telephone. As for the "small mediaeval rooms," can Mr. Greene, who describes the house with so much confidence, ever have seen the great living-room which Griggs built for himself and his family—and the great company of his friends?

Mr. Greene says that "under his leadership" bungalows and workmen's cottages "were pushed beyond the imaginary walls of what was in effect a dream town." I cannot think where Mr. Greene would have had these buildings built except where they were. In the middle of Campden High Street?

Finally—Griggs risked all that he had, and perhaps a little more, to save Dover's Hill from the speculative builder. He was luckier there than he was with his house, thanks to a great and generous man. But that alone, I think, should have saved him from supercilious treatment in the paper, which, unless my memory betrays me, first launched the word "amenities" upon the public.—Yours faithfully,

EDWARD SHANKS.

[Mr. Greene writes: Mr. Shanks has mistaken description for criticism. New buildings were kept outside the town—why not note the fact? Actually, Campden is not confined to the High Street, and from the point of view of the inhabitants rather than of the tourists there are many picturesque cottages in Sheep Street, Watery Lane and Littleworth which might well be demolished. I expressly stated, however, that the late F. L. Griggs was not responsible for this kind of conservation. As for his house, my reference seems to have been erroneous, but surely both electric light and telephone were afterwards? I still think that "escape" is an accurate description of the Campden attitude—a description and not a criticism as far as Griggs's work is concerned. I can't see where the superciliousness comes in. Must one always strike an emotional attitude?]

## COUNTRY LIFE

## Winter Kingfishers

I have been watching kingfishers all winter, and now a West Country correspondent sends a series of interesting notes about them, discussing mostly their coloration, but recording also how they come right up into the heart of the city at Bath, as far even as the Roman Baths there. The birds I watched were never seen other than singly until early spring, and they had more regular habits than any bird I had ever seen. Every day, about three o'clock in the afternoon, they patrolled the same territory, almost always in the same direction; they would go for 200 yards or so through the tunnel of young alder and hazel-cattails overhanging the small river, turn, come back and then break away for a short flight through a wood on the waterside. They emerged a hundred yards upstream and then came down the adjoining lake, alighting on the willow-trees, whose buds, in the winter sun, shone like grains of corn. The short, shrill, repeated little cry was arresting and a little melancholy in the winter afternoon silences by water. In late February there seemed to be signs of pairing, though it was officially two months too soon, and the flights were sharper and shorter, less brilliantly sustained, were a nervous display. Much of that time I spent in trying to find the word for what I had always felt to be the most brilliant plumage of any native bird—when suddenly, in strong March sun, a kingfisher alighted on a tawny-mauve bush of alder, a yard away, and lifted a breast of such flashing copper that even the blue-emerald of the wings was out-dazzled.

## "The Countryman"

If there has ever been a bad number of *The Countryman* I have never seen it. The fourteenth birthday number is slim, but in all other respects as admirable as ever. Its range is delightfully wide; it faces all rural problems, as always, with freshness and realism. Half a dozen land-griggs, speaking their piece about their work, have some pretty hard things to say about a life of which loneliness seems to be the hardest part. ("You have to be a country fanatic, like me, to stodge on month after month with no prospect of advancement.") There are some stony facts from a market-gardener, formerly a public-school boy, about a trade in which, "unless you have exceptional brains and forethought, your ride is going to be a rough one." He, too, has something to say of land-griggs: "Out of my twenty land-griggs, only twelve were capable of earning their country minimum on piece-work rates at the end of the month." He favours local women—that race of blowsy Amazons who work in sackcloth and the old man's cap and look like something left over from a revolution. In this same number rural authors speak on rural education, and farmer-subscribers from all parts give some pretty cold advice to the young soldier who, after the war, wants to fulfil the eternal dream of a farm.

## Selling Surplus

It became possible, for the first time in my gardening life, to sell some surplus vegetables. The experience may be useful to those who are attracted by the idea of a little summer pin-money. I put up six dozen leeks and three dozen salsify. Leeks were still scarce; they were retailed at as much as fourpence each; and my green-grocer hadn't a single leek in the shop. Yet, for some strange reason, I was instantly informed that the season for leeks was "about finished now, and folks don't want 'em." Reluctantly, however, I was allowed to bring in my leeks. They took two hours to dig and wash (six and two shillings at country working rates), another hour to tie up and transport by car (say, another two shillings for time and petrol). The price offered—leeks handed over in neat bundles, washed, ready for sale—was a penny each. Reckon another two shillings for seed and labour of cultivation, and the profit to me is nil. The price for the salsify is still forthcoming—"because, you see, I don't know if I can sell it or not. So we'll just see what we can get." All this checks exactly with the early experiences of the young market-gardener in *The Countryman*, and it seems to me that those who have any ideas of disposing of their surplus vegetables at a profit this summer had better forget them. I shall personally revert to the pleasant practice of giving them away.

## In the Garden

The first flowers of the year have gone. Tulips suddenly take the place of snowdrops, daffodils of the yellow crocuses. Every year *Tulip kaufmanniana* is an unfailing joy: large, delicate water-lilies of moon-yellow. The variety Brilliant is earlier, soft and fiery in early March, a sort of smouldering carmine. In February I gave up the *Iris reticulata* as a bad job; only a few steely spears remained. By March they crowded everywhere in flaming purple sheaves. By then they were countless. *Anemone blanda* came with them; so many delicate pink and blue and mauve catenae-wheels flat against the earth in the midday-sun. Rose-brown shoots of lilies were suddenly seen to be thick among the daffodils; peaches broke pink buds, chionodoxa and primula made bright sprinklings of blue and purple everywhere, and a small tyrant of three years old rode a triumphant tricycle through treasured areas of purple crocus, making his own demonstration of the arrival of spring.

H. E. PATES.

observer" and "one of our observers who has travelled very widely in Abyssinia." In any case let us hope that future relations of Great Britain and Abyssinia will be settled apart from these "imperialistic" gentlemen.—I remain, yours faithfully,

M. STORR, Hon. Sec.

Abyssinia Association, West of England Branch,  
6 Mount Beacon, Bath.

### "CONSERVATIVE SOCIALISM"

SIR,—Mr. Hamilton Fyfe's letter raises several interesting points: that agreement about fundamentals is essential to the working of democracy; that there is a general acceptance of the necessity for Socialism or the omniscient State; and that in the times of James II and George III the nation had decided it would not endure absolutism, whether claiming Divine right or working in the guise of Parliamentarism. Now, while an omniscient State might be splendid, are we not much more likely to produce an omniscient State if we go in wholeheartedly for State-run businesses? And how is absolutism to be prevented or checked under a Socialist régime? No doubt the State will, and ought to, take over more of the national services than it had done pre-war; and supervise in the national interest others (perhaps all others) that it does not take over, but I am sure that there is no general acceptance of complete Socialism, and no general belief in any omniscient State.—Yours, &c.,

J. S. M. JACK.

Foxbar, Paisley.

### AIR-RAID VICTIMS AND THE PURCHASE-TAX

SIR,—The effect of the Purchase-Tax on air-raid victims bears very hardly in some cases, and, as far as my enquiries go, no Government legislation is in existence, or contemplated, to relieve sufferers. May I quote my own case, which is no doubt similar to hundreds of others? My house, and its entire contents, were destroyed as a result of enemy-action some three months ago, and I will not dwell on the most tragic side—the deaths of members of my family. I am now faced with the necessity of purchasing articles of clothing, essential household equipment, and many other goods if I am to continue to "keep my chin up" and to carry on. I cannot claim to be in immediate financial necessity, so have to live on the hope that in the far future I shall receive some compensation. For the present, however, I find that my slender savings are fast disappearing, because of the extra purchase-tax which I am compelled to pay on practically every article I need. Is there no relief in such cases?—Yours faithfully,  
23 Oakham Road, Harborne, Birmingham.

G. F. BENNETT.

### RAID THANK-OFFERINGS

SIR,—From several quarters I have received the suggestion that I should supply boxes in which households should place thanks-offerings of varying amounts for a peaceful night or for a night with raids but no damage to person or property, the proceeds to go to my National Air-Raid Distress Fund. The suggestion of such a regular thank-offering is an excellent one, but with the restrictions, almost prohibitions, on the use of materials, I fear the supply of boxes in such quantities is quite impossible. Is it not possible to adopt the principle and practice of the scheme and for each household to provide some suitable receptacle in which the daily offering might be placed? If the scheme were simplified to a gift of one penny for a raid-free night and twopenny for a night of raids without personal damage, I think it might well be adopted generally throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, as the benefits of the Fund have just as wide a scope. The plan involves no expense, and I appeal to tens of thousands to adopt this simple plan and to remit the amount collected in their household to me at the Mansion House every half-year, marking their letter "Thank-offering."—Yours truly,  
GEO. H. WILKINSON, Lord Mayor.

The Mansion House, London, E.C. 4.

### "A NEW START WITH FARMING"

SIR,—May I correct a misprint (due no doubt to my handwriting) in the letter from me which you were good enough to print in your issue of 21st inst. I wrote: "If unsubsidised farming, reasonable skill, reshaped and re-equipped farms and adequate finance would yield a self-supporting industry; the need for state ownership is not apparent." You printed "If we subsidised farming, &c.," which alters the whole sense.—Yours, &c.,

Letcombe Bowers, Wantage.

ALFRED BEESLY.

### SAVING PAPER

SIR,—"Janus" in his recent references to paper-shortage referred to scores of publications which serve no useful purpose at all. I would like to draw attention to the thousands of company-reports which are circulated to shareholders. I feel confident that the vast majority on receiving such a report and finding that it is not a dividend, place it promptly unread in the waste-paper basket. Would it not be possible to provide that such reports be not circulated and be only supplied to any shareholders at their request?—Yours faithfully,  
JAMES W. T. HOLLAND.

27 Sefton Drive, Liverpool, 8.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Bark Harvest

Most of us, I suppose, think of hay-time as the first harvest of the year. But a chance advertisement, "flowers wanted for oak-bark harvest," reminds me that there is another, almost two months earlier, with which Thomas Hardy was quite familiar. Oak is felled in spring, when sap is rising and leaf and flower are just making green. Woodsman'ship is seen at its neatest in the job of barking the tree, leaving it like a golden skeleton on the rich May grass, and in the grading of every top twig and foot of cordwood. Flawless strip the bark, which yields easily as the sap rises, with barking irons, piling it in green-brown stacks. The twigs, leaves sipped after a day or two of May sun, are arranged into what are known in some parts as bavin or sprays. The whole job is an example of one of those expert conscientious crafts that are slipping out of the life of the countryside very fast. Spring oak also cleaves well, and cleft oak has remarkable durability and strength and makes the finest fences, but I rather think that oak-cleavers, like flowers, are a rare and dying race.

### Green Hellebore

One of the small delights of spring has been the wild English hellebore: a green-flowered miniature of the Christmas rose. There are two English species, and this, *viridis*, is the smaller. Sowerby and in fact most authorities speak of it as rare, Sowerby mentioning only two localities for it at the end of the eighteenth century, but it seems to be fairly common in Kentish chalk woods, growing under much the same conditions as the white hellebore, a charming little June ghost-orchid with which it is not to be confused. Against the pure solid white Christmas roses and the warm claret-green Lenten roses, this tiny green species might be expected to look insignificant: yet in fact all its charm comes from exactly those things, its timeliness and its greenness. Its colour lacks dullness and solidity. Very soft, it has a sort of satin transparency. It looks neutral, and yet is very alive and delicate, and the cream ring of stamens gives it a neat flow of friendliness.

### Plain Vegetables

About seventy varieties of vegetables have been mentioned in this column during the last few months, as much as an incentive to the use of a little imagination in the kitchen garden as anything else; readers have shown great interest in most of them, and a good deal of mouth-watering was caused, for example, by the description of asparagus-peas. But the conservative gardener deserves a turn, and his book is *Plain Vegetable Growing* by George E. Whitehead (A. and C. Black, 2s. 6d.). This is one of Black's Kitchen Front series, in which incidentally Mr. Ambrose Heath's *From Cress to Kitchen* is an eye-opener on the cooking of fresh-water fish. *Plain Vegetable Growing* is a slightly misleading title, and the conservative may be astonished to discover at first sight that there are between thirty and forty vegetables which may be considered plain. Mr. Whitehead saves himself, however, by classing such things as sea-kale, asparagus, sweet-corn and artichokes as luxuries. The book is simple and straightforward, yet remote from that depressing class of work in which glibly working illustrations stare woodenly from every page. Neat hints on pests, fertilisers and seasonal jobs take their place, and of the vast spring catch-crop of cheap gardening books, some very dubious and shoddy, I should say *Plain Vegetable Growing* goes into the first half dozen.

### In the Garden

My recent note on the urgent need for growing six times or perhaps even ten times more tomatoes than in a normal year brought a surprising number of requests "not to be silly." These I noted, came mostly from the trade, which declared elsewhere that it could deal adequately with the situation. I am sure it can—much the same principle as the flower-trade is now dealing with, for example, tulips. Imports of tulips having been cut off, home-grown tulips of moderate quality are selling, in moderate shops, for as much as 5s. 6d. a dozen. This gives a fair indication of what may happen to tomatoes (even if there were not the earlier precedent of leeks and onions). It is clear that the import of tomatoes from France, Holland, Belgium, the Channel Islands, the Canaries and even North Africa, which I believe sent excellent early tomatoes here, was normally colossal. The tomato trade in England now hopes to extend its season by six weeks—it declared itself unable to compete against foreign imports after mid-August in normal times—but even so I doubt its ability to make up that enormous deficiency. As always the price—and the effects of any control—will be worth watching. Meanwhile I shall grow six times more tomatoes than last year, including a golden-fleshed variety, which is, by the way, far less liable to disease than the red.

H. E. BATES.