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## COUNTRY LIFE

## Ploughing and Potatoes

Do we really need a very much greater acreage of potatoes? When I read that "thousands of tons of dried Dutch peas (were) processed, dyed, flavoured, and canned in this country to sell as English green peas," and on the same day hear an English farmer declare that he has a hundred and fifty tons of potatoes "which I cannot sell," I am left wondering whether the campaign for an increased acreage of potatoes is not, like some other agricultural propaganda seems to have been to plough and crop as if the devil were behind you with a three-pronged fork, and to regard potatoes as the salvation of all evils. Yet again and again I hear farmers declare that the ploughing up and cropping policy should be a two-year and not a one-year plan. Much land, newly ploughed, is in dreadful condition, and would be better fallowed, sown with a green crop, cleared by sheep, and then ploughed and sown in autumn. Last year much harvest on newly ploughed land was 50 per cent. rubbish. Again, farmers despair of the zest with which they are ordered to plough up small isolated scraps of land, sometimes of two acres or less, and feel certain of uneconomic results.

## March Goes

By the end of March spring had come strongly, but in small things: many primroses, brilliant sprinklings of white, purple and sometimes wild pink violets, naked yellow coltsfoot, wild anemones, a few dark buds of bluebells. Scarlet families of ladybirds, looking very like pimpinels, lazed on the earth in the sun. Sallow trees were all honey and feathers on every wood-side; golden saxifrages opened tiny starry flowers, more green and yellow, among the water-cress. Thrushes nested, laid eggs, deserted, began again; the best of the year's miracles, the nest of the long-tailed tit, was found where, year after year, it is always found. Bees had long since been out, and with them a few tortoiseshells. Swans began building their great fawn basket among the reeds, and a fish rose on a golden afternoon from among the unfurling water-lily leaves to take a minute cream smooth, and missed. Elms blossomed, the woods smouldered on the distances, and the buds of chestnut suddenly broke open, cream and shiny, for all the world as if dipped in caramel.

## Parish Council

Much though I dislike the thought, I am beginning to wonder if the English Parish-Council is not a dying institution which the war will finish off completely. After four years of parish-council work, it is my impression that the average villager, together with the average resident who lives in the country because it is a pleasant place, does not care much whether he has a parish-council or not. During those four years the average yearly attendance at parish-meetings and parish-council meetings in my village has been half a dozen people, excluding the council itself, which maintained a hundred-per-cent. attendance record. Yet during that time important decisions affecting schools, air-raid shelters, commons, dangerous corners, council houses, street-paths and bridges, and the spending of public money, were being made. This year the annual parish-meeting was attended by not a single person.

## In the Garden

Several correspondents have asked for fuller particulars of the seed-collections put up for the Women's Institutes by a high-class firm of seed merchants. I am afraid these are, however, available to members only, and the nearest and best substitute I can recommend is the *Good Housekeeping* collection, already advertised in *The Spectator*. Of its fifteen interesting varieties I am most attracted by a golden climbing bean, a new yellow tomato, calabrese (a delicious sprouting broccoli, which I have praised again and again), and a new water-melon which can be grown outdoors. Celeriac, endive, salsify, kohlrabi, a new swede, and sweet-corn, are also included. Correspondents are continually writing about sweet-corn. The text-book rules are that it should be sown under glass in April, and planted out in a warm spot in May on rich, deep-dug soil. Or it can be sown outdoors at the end of May. What the text-book does not mention is that pollination may misfire if the plants are planted in a row, and the best suggestion I have seen is that they should be planted in a square. Also thin the cobs, leaving two or three only to a plant.

H. E. BATES.

## THE CINEMA

"Victory." At the Plaza.—"Mr. and Mrs. Smith." At the New Gallery.

*Victory*, though based on the story by Conrad, is no more successful and no less embarrassing than the vast majority of American pictures which are set in the tropics. Hollywood's method of treating the tropics is to underline everything three times and smother the whole in treacle. *Victory* opens with a seedy hotel in the Malay Archipelago, where all the characters, except the hero and heroine (Mr. Fredric March and Miss Betty Field), are grotesque caricatures, both in appearance and behaviour, but without that slickness of line, that exact orientation, which caricature requires. From this circus of phoney monsters, redolent of old-fashioned vice, we move on to a desert island—a real little Garden of Eden—and wait for the snakes, who duly arrive in the shape of Sir Cedric Hardwicke attended by two plug-uglies, Mr. Jerome Cowan and Mr. Lionel Royce. These snakes are very ham, but they give an opportunity to the hero to fight a moral battle with himself, and so vindicate the title of the picture. All three snakes are killed, Mr. March, cured of his Timon-esque misanthropy, is left in the arms of Miss Field (who, while looking like a schoolgirl with a crush on her housemistress, has just stabbed a man in the back), and a stray Chinese servant reappears to pick up the furniture.

*Mr. and Mrs. Smith* was directed by Mr. Hitchcock, but no one would guess it; it is a very conventional Hollywood light comedy, not so good as many that have gone before it. Both of the stars—Mr. Robert Montgomery and Miss Carole Lombard—have shown themselves adepts in this genre, but this time the action drags; I found myself thinking nostalgically of *My Man Godfrey*, where Miss Lombard, playing opposite Mr. William Powell, got pretty near the zenith of any sex-appeal and high-ball farce, compared with which her latest performance is flat. Mr. Montgomery, who rarely (if ever?) throws away a part; is here a good deal the more amusing of the two.

There are, it must be admitted, some very funny scenes, e.g., when husband and wife revisit, in a mood of romance, one of the haunts of their courtship, a little Italian café which has since changed hands and become a joint for the unshaven; in spite of this they nobly attempt to revive old times, have a table carried into the street, where they are stared at by Medusa-like street-arabs, and are served with a soup which is refused even by the cat; the cat is sitting on the table. But perhaps we are getting a little tired of these high-life marital whimsies, where the husbands and wives have infinite leisure to throw tantrums and bottles, and sulk, and be reconciled, and start all over again with lots of new dishes to break.

LOUIS MACNEICE.

## THE RED TOWER

The Red Tower on the glorious hill,  
The awkward skill of girlhood, and its beauty,  
The fury of a rose in summer burning,  
Or the great library bowed down with learning,  
These, as intricate as a tree, as tall and sheltering,  
Stand like a people's freedom or the stars.

It is not time that kills  
Though time tread brutally as a country wagon;  
The tree must bear its fruit, and stone and steel  
Cry out for use and wear, and these are death.  
Before the wheels are turned the rust begins,  
Before the words are learned the legend turns  
Into an idle tale of kings and dragons;  
Even before the benediction ends,  
Whether in rain or sun, the tower crumbles.

But O, blossoming and impermanent,  
Precarious as the rose that throws its petals,  
The tower cannot fall but hands and voices  
Rise to rebuild, and build as if for ever,  
The wall, the winding stair, the massive dome.  
Serene and fragile as a moment's vision,  
The form that dies in childbirth and survives,  
Held against rain and sun, the tower stands,  
Forever held, forever falling.

MICHAEL ROBERTS.

government in England that officials do not take important decisions without reference, or at least report, to an appropriate committee. I am assured, for instance, by members of our Watch Committee, that no police-officer could be dismissed without reference to themselves.

But it seems clear that, in establishing the A.R.P. services, the Ministry of Home Security has laid down procedure which differs little from that followed in totalitarian countries and which, if extended, would cut at the roots of our democratic tradition. In fact the Ministry has conferred on Chief Constables what amount to dictatorial powers, provided they put forward the plea of "the interests of public security" to justify their action.

This matter seems to me to raise a principle of great importance, and I am anxious to know whether the new procedure has been generally accepted by A.R.P. committees up and down the country. If any of your readers who are members of a local authority can give me information on this point I shall be most grateful.

R. ST. JOHN READE  
(City Councillor).

4 Goldney Avenue, Bristol, 8.

### "BLACK RECORD"

SIR,—Your references to this country are generally so reasonable and well informed that I hardly like to cavil at a small point in "A Spectator's Notebook" in your issue of March 28th. The writer states that the circulation of Sir R. Vansittart's *Black Record* is prohibited in Eire, and describes this as an example of "timorousness."

Personally, I had no difficulty in obtaining a copy of this book through a Dublin bookseller when it first came out, though quite possibly it has been prohibited since then. The Government of this country, having resolved, for reasons which need not be discussed, to remain neutral during the present war, has decided that the local Press and the publications allowed to be sold must observe a certain degree of impartiality and not contain matter too obviously of the nature of propaganda. This seems to me a wise decision, and I see nothing "timorous" in it. To quote only one possibility, would you or the British Government have liked to see Eire flooded with German propaganda, paid for with German money and with, no doubt, frequent references to both remote and recent Anglo-Irish history?

I beg to enclose my card and to add that I write as an ex-Unionist and one in full agreement with most of what Sir R. Vansittart has to say about Germany and the Germans.—Yours, &c., LEINSTERMAN.  
Ireland.

### SHELTER-CULTURE

SIR,—Dr. H. M. Lydenberg, Director of the New York Public Library, expresses surprise in a recent letter that "Britain, with its back to the wall, exempted books from the purchase-tax." He should have known, of course, that our gesture was merely "in character." We have long become attuned to belligerency as a normal condition, and have so adjusted our affairs that life goes on much as usual during daylight, though after dark there is some departure from normal. Though we know we cannot hope to fight the war to an end without considerable increase in suffering and destruction, we have no conception that we could ever be defeated. Hence, everyone tries to pull his weight, and—following our national habit of compromise—we carry our peace-time activities into the war-zone and there adapt them. We recognise that the war has made—and will make more—alterations in our social structure, but we see no reason why it should appreciably affect what I must call (for want of a more fitting English equivalent) British Kultur.

It is this native Kultur which will in the end triumph over the Nazi spirit, and I therefore write to call the attention of your readers to the work now being done by some public librarians in organising shelter-libraries, reading and dramatic circles, discussion-groups, travelogues, lectures, &c., in public shelters, in the hope that those who can spare the time will be inspired to follow suit. Two of the poorest East End Boroughs—Shoreditch and Bermondsey—set worthy examples. It is clear that a real community-spirit, together with a sense of social purpose—which will have important repercussions in the period of reconstruction after the war, is being developed there by these means.—Yours faithfully,

C. M. JACKSON, Borough Librarian.  
Central Library, Pitfield Street, Shoreditch, N.1.

### "HARTINGTON"

SIR,—I am attempting, in spite of the difficulties of the hour, to complete a life of that eighth Duke of Devonshire once universally known as "Hartington." The standard biography by the late Bernard Holland was compiled just after its subject's death, and, whatever its merits as an essay in Palmerstonian Whiggery, is perhaps a little deficient on the personal side. As it embodies one of Hartington's correspondence, excepting the juvenile or the very official, I would like to ask if any of your readers possessing letters from him would do me the favour of allowing me to read, and possibly copy, them. Every care and consideration would be shown.—Thanking you, yours faithfully,

H. V. COLLINS.  
Hill View, Wimborne Road, Ferndown.

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SIR,—The letters on this subject have been most helpful, but I would suggest that there is a danger of the Church overlooking its own teaching function. After all, Christian education can only be given by those who profess and call themselves Christians. Speaking as an old schoolmaster I would like to add that if we are going to wait until we have sufficient competent teachers in our day schools who come under that category, we shall miss the tide, and the generation that is growing up round about us will be semi-pagan, to say the least.

The Christian Churches have in their own hands the solution to the problem. If they will fearlessly face the revitalising and improvement of their Sunday Schools and strain every effort to bring into the Sunday School world the young folks and make provision for their all-round life, we can within the present generation go a long way to Christianise our England. By all means let our Church leaders call for reforms in the religious teaching given in the day schools, but let us recognise that if the Churches are to have the right to demand those reforms they must demonstrate their concern by doing more for their own Sunday Schools. That these schools should be understaffed and ill-equipped in a multitude of instances is a tragedy.—Yours, &c.,

ROBERT J. DENIFOLD.

General Secretary, The National Sunday School Union.  
56 Old Bailey, London, E.C. 4.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Surplus and Distribution

From Yorkshire comes a contribution to the garden-surplus problem that is full of gumption. There, as elsewhere, the surplus produce of the district is best handled by the market-stalls of the Women's Institutes. The figures are interesting: "We started a market-stall last July, and in up to a fortnight ago had taken £900, all of which (except for 1d. in 1s. for expenses and a smaller percentage on eggs) was given direct to the producers. We sell the produce of two large gardens, but otherwise the public has the advantage of buying excellent fresh vegetables, flowers, &c., in such tiny quantities that without our stall they would most certainly not be sold at all." This is a sensible and business-like solution. Another, from Sussex, advocates a surplus-post plan (already tried by a good many people I think), by which townfolk can buy at wholesale prices from friends in the country. Meanwhile the alleged scandal of wasted produce at Covent Garden comes as no surprise, but is none the less serious for that. It should have seemed obvious long ago that you cannot urge any gardener in the Kingdom to grow more produce and still expect the normal sources of supply and distribution to function as though nothing had happened.

### Flowering Cypress

The flowering shrubs are in their glory; but who would have thought of a cypress as being among them? A blue variety of *Cupressus Laszowskia* was planted ten years ago, has made superb growth, and is the first nesting site of the year. Suddenly it is covered with flowers. All the tips of the young branches are sprinkled with brilliant little pin-feathers of vermilion-pink. They grow cross-wise on the flat blue branches, in correct parallel, exactly like the feathers of young birds. They rather resemble, too, the scarlet-pink stars of hazel, and, like them, are the male flowers. There were never flowers quite so stiff and yet delicate: so that the whole tree looks as if skilfully decorated, vermilion on blue, a sort of Easter Christmas-tree.

### In the Garden

Clip off the leaves of last year's spinach instead of digging up the plant; the young leaves will come in before the new-sown crop. Try a sowing of runner-beans (of which there is already a slight shortage of seed) in the greenhouse or frame, putting out the plants in late May. By this means, and by pricking out top-shoots and dispensing with sticks, you should pick beans at least three weeks earlier than your plants sown in the ordinary way. Frame-cucumbers are often, at first, more top than root; but remember the tops are an excellent substitute for parsley, and contain Vitamin C. If you were wise in the autumn, frame-lettuces should now be large-headed and succulent and just about worth their weight in gold. Frame-potatoes will need no earthing-up: a four-inch dressing of fine soil is enough. Don't try cabbage and brussels-sprout plants between early potatoes with the idea of saving space; instead, clear the crop by July and then sow either swedes, of which the top-shoots in spring are excellent, or asparagus-kale, which should be sown thickly and then thinned where it stands, not transplanted. These two crops will solve all fresh-vegetable problems in late spring. Finally, calomel-dust is the official remedy for cabbage root-fly, but is expensive. Try the country remedy: a strong solution of soot and salt water.

H. E. BATES.

## THE JUNIOR OFFICER'S PAY

Sir.—The article under the above heading which you published in the issue of April 14th most ably states the case for an increase in the pay of the junior officer, and it is to be hoped it attracts attention from the appropriate quarter. The further increase in income-tax brought into effect by the recent Budget will make the struggle still harder. Perhaps not all of the public realise that an officer is liable for income-tax (as your contributor states) he is not "housed and boarded" here, that his cigarettes and drinks in mess are not exempt from tax, and that the purchase-tax extends to articles of uniform which, in the face of the rigours of service-life, he must maintain smart and in good condition for the sake of example.

As to the wages of civilian armament-factory workers, one reads in the daily Press of cases where a wage of £6 to £8 has been paid to youths of under 18 years of age. This latter wage is approximately equivalent to the daily rate of pay of a captain (Army) with 14 years' service and is twice that of a 2nd lieutenant. It appears, therefore, that at some at any rate of Mr. Bevin's war of industrial workers are virtually being bribed to "go to it."

The present rates of pay do not, moreover, act as an incentive to a non-commissioned officer (say a Flight Sergeant) who aspires to a commission. His attitude may well be that he is better off in the mess than he would be as an officer. In these days when young men from all classes who possess the true qualities of leadership are rightly encouraged to take their commissions, it seems unfortunate that such a possible deterrent should exist. It is to be hoped that, as a result of the War Office examination of the subject, revised rates of pay will shortly be brought into effect and that a similar procedure will be followed both by the Admiralty and the Air Ministry, thus removing what at present constitutes a standing reproach.—Yours faithfully,

I. D. S. GORDON, Major (Retired Pay).

Treble House, Blewbury, Berks.

## TRAVELLING CONDITIONS

Sir.—No doubt your correspondent was actuated by chivalrous feelings in writing to complain of the unfortunate experience of the individual in travelling a long distance to apply for a post. But, in fairness to the railways, I think that letter requires a reply. Why did the traveller in question remain standing for hours in the corridor if there were seats vacant in first-class carriages instead of showing some initiative and taking one of those seats? Or, if she was afraid to do that for fear of being charged extra, why did she not appeal to the guard or ticket-collector to be given one of those seats? I have done a good deal of travelling of late in extremely crowded trains and have found the railway officials always courteous and ready to help. I have travelled in a first-class carriage with a third-class ticket when there were no seats available elsewhere and I have also taken turns with other passengers to share a seat in a carriage and stand in the corridor alternately.

The railways have to work under immense difficulties and I consider that they deserve high praise for the way they are carrying on, instead of being blamed for overcrowding and maladjustment.—Yours, &c.,

DINAH M. B. SYNGE.

Oldfield, Green Street, Stevenage, Herts.

## A NAVAL CHIEF

Sir.—Being one of the 10,000 ignorant ones referred to by "Janus" in your issue of April 4th, perhaps he would kindly inform us who the man is—I am, Sir,

W. TOWER TOWNSHEND.

Bodiam Manor, Sussex.

["Janus" writes: I was, if I may confess it, one of the 10,000 myself when I wrote my note, and since then I have found enlightenment. The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, in succession to Sir Charles Forbes, is Sir John Tovey.]

## DOWN WITH HIGHBROWS

Sir.—I am sorry that I misquoted Lord Elton as having used the word highbrow. I am afraid that I must have been confused by reading, at the same time as his books, an article about it in *The Times*, in which highbrow was the operative word. But inaccurate quotation in a review is unpardonable, and I apologise.

I did not mean to understate the number of fatal casualties in the war, nor do I know what percentage of our fighting forces it was. I was only questioning the tragic theory that it included not merely great numbers of the ablest and best, but nearly all. I doubt if facts bear this out.—Yours, &c.,

ROSE MACAULAY.

## A USE FOR OLD BOTTLES

Sir.—"Janus" complains that he can find no one to relieve him of his old bottles. May I say that in this town we find that our veterinary surgeon is most grateful for bottles of all kinds? Perhaps "Janus" may find a similar need in his locality.—Yours faithfully,

E. S. EATHERIDGE.

Camperdown House, Imperial Service College, Windsor.

## COUNTRY LIFE

## Ley-Farming

I recently noted the opinion of many farmers that the ploughing-up campaign seemed to be the result of a short-term rather than a long-term policy, and I suggested that ploughing for ploughing's sake was not enough. It is always a satisfying thing to find an opinion shared by an expert. The part played by grass in the agriculture of this country is, and must continue to be, a large one, and Sir George Stapledon's review of the situation in *Ley-Farming* (University College of Wales, 1935) is a short piece of expert sense that is worth a ton of the patriotic pulp churned out as "urgent advice to farmers." Sir George has no use for the school which "holds the present situation so serious that we can but meet our present needs by concentrating wholly and always on the next few months ahead." He supports the side "that holds that *so serious is the present situation* that we can only hope to meet our present needs by looking forward not merely for nine or twelve months but at *least four years*." (Italics mine.) He goes on to say that "it is not right to set out to plough up ley quotas of permanent grass. Our aim must be all the time to substitute good systems of farming for bad systems." And the good systems are, in his expert view, arable proper and ley-farming.

## Tae Urgent Need

It is impossible, in a short note, to convey really adequately what ley-farming is. Sir George Stapledon defines it as "a system which takes the plough round practically the whole of the farm, and which is conducted in terms of a rotation or of rotations based on the use of the ley of a duration of two years and upwards." And again: "the philosophy of ley-farming turns upon the humus-giving and fertility-sustaining power of the grass-sod, and the aim of the ley-farmer is to use that power to the maximum." The strength of the system is its flexibility. Ley-grass, with its longer growing season, produces finer spring and winter grazing, with the use of Italian ryegrass, and healthier stock than that maintained on permanent grass. We suffer from a vast acreage not only of derelict land but of plough-sick and grass-sick land. For both, ley-farming is clearly the cure. To the conservative farmer it will, I daresay, seem drastic, just as Sir George's remark that "no field in permanent grass is too good to be ploughed up" will seem drastic. To discuss in detail the various plans and rotation of ley-farming is impossible here; there are obstacles to its smooth success, and not least among them, I fancy, will be the attitude of the economic, official and farming mind. It is clearly a revolutionary thing to turn from an almost religious reverence for permanent grass, and farm on this untraditional and flexible system. But in Sir George's view we must do it. Traditions, accepted systems, "money, inclination, reputation, esteem—they matter not at all. Today it is only food that matters."

## Grecian Hellebore

Two interesting postscripts to wild daphne and green hellebore. A correspondent reports the daphne as having been very common, at one time on the Wiltshire-Somerset borders, and now says that he finds it very common in the gardens of Belfast, and wonders whether its presence there is an indication of strong Old English influences. (The green daphne, *Daphne Lauriola*, is of course far commoner, and is now in flower, making small rhododendron-like shrubs in chalk woods, handsome, charming and, like all the family, fragrant.) A note on the hellebore, which another correspondent reports as being extremely common in Hampshire, is more topical. An officer of the last war writes to say that it "grows fairly profusely in those parts of Macedonia—the Struma Valley for example—in which our armies were stationed during the last war. I used often to dismount from my horse and pick them when riding through the wooded valleys of the uplands." He describes it as having been used by the peasants as an application for wounds, to stop bleeding. And in some other respects it seems a topical plant, for a purgation of Hellebore is, according to Gerrard, "good for mad and furious men, for melancholy, dull and heave persons, and briefly for all those that are troubled with blacke cholera, and molested with melancholy."

## In the Garden

A sweet-toothed friend asks after the possibilities of sugar-beet as a source of household sugar. I am sceptical, but a correspondent writes to say that the grew sugar-beet with great success last year, getting from it several pounds of treacle sugar useful for cooking. Worth trying, I think. Sweet-corn for poultry is a good tip, too. And what are the plans for the greenhouse in autumn? Food or flowers? Late food-crops under glass need expert management. Try chrysanthemums, about which, in some quarters, there exists a certain snobbishness. ("I hate those mops.") Yet the medium-sized decorative varieties are all enchanting and in October and November will retail at from five to ten shillings a dozen. Buy your plants now and, if you feel ignorant about culture or varieties, put yourself in the hands of a local nurseryman. He cannot afford to grow dud varieties.

H. E. BATES.

of being a Monarchist, opposed the removal of the King's remains for fear of a national demonstration against the Phalanx, disguised as support for the Monarchy. If, in fact, the Spanish people have been told nothing, and the burial has been carried out in secret as though it were a crime, this would be just as strong a confirmation of my statement as the failure to remove the King's remains.—Yours, &c.,  
THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLE.

### WHERE ARE WE GOING?

STR.—I read with interest Mr. St. John Read's account of the dismissal of an air-raid warden at Bristol. I regret to say that in the experience of my Council this is by no means an isolated instance. Among cases that have been reported to us the following is typical. A voluntary air-raid warden in Birmingham received a letter from the divisional warden informing him that he was dismissed. When he enquired what the reason might be he was given no answer. Being a member of the National Union of Commercial Travellers he reported the matter to them, and the secretary of his branch, on making representations, was informed that "it was not in the public interest" for any explanation to be given of the dismissal. The union, having every confidence in their member, pressed the matter further, and the chairman, a councillor, went to see the divisional warden, who had taken responsibility in the matter, but he was not interviewed.

Mr. St. John Read has clearly shown the dangers involved in the assumption of arbitrary authority by paid officials in place of the appropriate elected local-government body, particularly in relation to matters directly affecting the liberty of the subject. The other aspect which deeply concerns this Council is the widespread tendency to refuse explanations to the victims of dismissals. If a man is not fit to perform the duties of an air-raid warden, and if the grounds are not those of inefficiency, then it is surely in the public interest that the reasons should be made known, and also it is only fair to the victim that he should be in a position to answer charges against him. If a man is suspected of activities endangering the public safety, then it is in the public interest that he should be charged and brought to trial, and it is in every way against the public interest that the matter should be hushed up. On the other hand, if there are no grounds for such allegations, a grave injustice is being done by giving the impression that such may be the case. It is a cause of grave concern that in many of the cases there are indications that political or personal prejudice may not be absent from these dismissals, and that the method of dismissal appears to be designed to close the door to enquiry into such motives. In any event it is prejudicial to public morale that there should be an air of Gestapo police-methods.—Yours faithfully,  
RONALD KIDD,  
National Council for Civil Liberties,  
37 Gt. James Street, W.C.1.

Secretary.

### "SUPPRESSIO VERI"

STR.—Some months ago I listened to Adolf Hitler broadcasting from Berlin. He taunted the B.E.F. for having run away from the Germans at Dunkirk. Last Wednesday I listened to Admiral Sir Frederic Dreyer broadcasting the war-commentary from London. He referred incidentally to the battle of Jutland, where, he said, the Germans ran away. He said nothing else at all about that engagement. Every naval officer, I suppose, knows what happened at Jutland. Admiral Dreyer certainly knows, for he was Jellicoe's flag-captain at the time. It is to be feared, however, that no more than a small proportion of the listening public have those facts in mind. They are given in every trustworthy account of the Jutland action, including the official history; and they do, at least, account for the German practice of celebrating the anniversary of Jutland as that of a German victory.

I need not particularise: the subject is not an agreeable one in any case. But I do not think that the B.B.C. ought to be made the medium of a falsification of recent history—I mean of the *suppressio veri* kind. To put it on no higher grounds, we can afford to despise our enemy at the present crisis of the Battle of the Atlantic?—Yours, &c.,  
D. M. STRANGE.

Maida Vale, W. 9.

### POLITICS IN ULSTER

STR.—I should like to congratulate "Janus" upon the fairly accurate perspective of his note on the recent by-election in North Down, Northern Ireland. The election was, in fact, a challenge to the official Unionist party-machine—or a revolt if one cares to use the term. But it might be wise to emphasise that Alderman Baillie, the successful Independent Unionist candidate, is as strong a Unionist as his opponent, and that the most that can be read into the result of the election is that it reveals an independence and freedom of thought and action which many deluded people felt had disappeared from Ulster many years ago. It rather gives the lie direct to allegations that Fascism is rampant over there.—Yours, &c.,  
M. G. GAVAN,  
London, W. 14.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Givvy Street

I think many country-dwellers, for whom country-life expresses tranquillity, tramps and all sorts of varied interests, have no notion at all of the intense boredom felt by thousands of soldiers stationed far away from towns. Some weeks ago I wrote of how, by accident, I picked up a north-country soldier and took him home. He is now a friend of the family, a regular visitor every Sunday and at least once during the week. The incredible boredom of his days—a day's work often consisting simply and solely of fetching the morning's newspapers in a 15-cwt. lorry a distance of ten miles—is now broken by the knowledge that he has somewhere to go for a meal, a drink, friends, conversation, music. In return he is happy to work in the garden, and since the rural-labour shortage is so acute I am glad that he should. He is simply one among the many thousands of the dispossessed—of whose problems many voluntary country-dwellers still remain unaware. I hate the word adoption, and in these days it is not always easy to keep open house even for one man, but it seems to me that it is up to country-people to do something about this. Givvy street, whether it means a decent cup of tea, apple-pie for supper, a Sibelius record or an hour on the potato patch is, after all, simply the new synonym for Utopia. It costs little to share.

### At the Flax

Flax has brought a new—perhaps more strictly a revived—industry to the countryside; and with it new sights. For now, in April, last year's crop is being spread out in grass-fields for its spring airing. Among the frost-weathered bomb-craters, across what used to be the cricket-pitch, it lies in thick olive-brown swathes, like a dream hay-crop somebody has forgotten to pick up. This airing process brings out half the village-population, and meadows have something of the communal glory of hay-time. For everybody now works, in some way or another, "at the flax." Factories are working a seven-day week, twenty-four hours a day; wages, more particularly for women, are above the local average. In fact most of the local casual labour has been absorbed, so that there will obviously be a shortage for potato-setting, pea-picking, fruit-picking, hopping and so on. Flax, unlike most crops, provides an all-the-year-round industry for twenty-four hours a day. To country folk, used to the dictation of season and weather, this is something entirely new. They are so used to variation, in fact, that the only danger in this new way of making a living is, according to one flax-worker, that they may be bored to death.

### Country Strangers

Lack of signposts means little to the countryman in his own area, yet nothing has changed travelling in the countryside so much. On a recent journey into the West country I found it interesting to note how defence-regulations have changed, or rather aggravated, the countryman's attitude to roads, strangers and directions. There was a time when "Can you tell me the way to?" was a sign for a nice set of rules to be brought into play. If both sides played properly this was one of the pleasant interludes in the motorist's schedule. It's all very different now. On a journey of 125 miles I got lost about fifteen times, three times hopelessly. I stopped to check my position about the same number of times. On about seventy-five per cent. of these occasions people professed the most astounding ignorance of the road I wanted; twenty per cent. of the rest misdirected me; the other five per cent. agreed with what I said. I learned too that to unfold a map in a car is roughly an act of treason. The countryman is certainly playing his part in tying even casual invaders into knots. Yet twice on this journey I came to within sight of the sea without being stopped and continued to drive in what are supposedly strict defence-areas without any question at all. However, I see from a local paper that on the day of a forthcoming sale an auctioneer's catalogue is all that is required for the penetration of one of the strictest areas.

### In the Garden

It is now almost impossible to get leak-seed. Plants from an outdoor sowing are, anyway, often small, and it will pay to try plants raised from a January sowing. Pricked out into fairly deep boxes and kept sheltered for a week or two, they will make early and enormous plants. The same procedure for onions will give large and good keeping bulbs. Celery is often regarded as an expert's crop. The chief troubles are late sowing, lack of water and premature earthing up. The days of six-foot celery are gone, but a long season of richly nourished growth is still essential. The water-problem will be partially solved if trenches are dug on the north side of the runner-bed rows, so that the plant will have some shade from hot sun. Early earthing, i.e., before the plants are 18 inches high, will produce twisted roots. Otherwise there are no tricks about this incomparable crop—prices of which, by the way, went as high as tenpence or a shilling a head last winter. And here, I think, one might hand a bouquet to seedsmen, whose generosity remains unaffected by difficult times. Half a fourpenny packet of tomato-seed produced, for me, sixteen dozen plants; half a fourpenny packet of celery about one thousand.  
H. E. BATES.

Roosevelt has had to work on public and Congressional opinion with the utmost delicacy. For it must be remembered—and this is perhaps the most important point of all—the United States has not yet been unified and purified by the ordeal by fire. The factors which pulled Britain together have not yet become operative here, though there is some sign that they are beginning to be. We have mixed racial backgrounds and all kinds of political, social, economic cross-currents. And, speaking of commitments, President Roosevelt is reported to have pledged Senator George, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, that he would not use the authority of the Lease-Lend Bill to establish a convoy-system. That seemed a necessary pledge at the time. The President is reputed to have said: "Convoys mean shooting, and shooting means war." And now the changing circumstances which produce the need for convoys demand able tactics in order to avoid risk to the President's authority and prestige.

As we have seen, Mr. Roosevelt is probably deliberately feeding the public impatience by holding off action. That is one of his favourite techniques. Throughout a long political career he has found he can best attain his ends by sitting tight until the very last moment, and then acting with smashing rapidity. Probably that will happen this time. But the suspense is terrific. While the Administration could probably "get away with" a decision to convoy, it would not be without a substantial body of dissent. The latest Gallup poll, which may be more advanced than Congressional sentiment, showed 41 per cent. for convoys and 50 per cent. against, but with 71 per cent. declaring they would support convoys "if it appears certain that Britain will be defeated unless we use our Navy to protect ships going to Britain." Doubtless the people will accept the President's own assurance as to when that moment is reached. All the same, a vote on convoys in Congress today would be highly problematical. Perhaps a substantial margin would vote in favour. But there is always the risk of a defeat, and in that case the situation would be much worse than if the President had approached the problem somewhat more gradually.

The entire situation is most unsatisfactory—and it is hard to write a convincing article about it—simply because we are dealing with the intangible, imponderable elements of public opinion. There is no doubt of President Roosevelt's firm intention to save Britain—whose own heroic efforts have of course done the major saving. And there is no doubt of the overwhelming American desire to help save Britain. Moreover, the President is doubtless the greatest living authority on American public opinion and the timing of action. Therefore we can well trust him to do the right thing when the right time has come. But to the journalistic amateur in these matters events seem to be moving very slowly. And the democratic curse of "too little and too late" hounds us perpetually day and night.

In many fundamental ways the American people are showing their basic determination. Congress and the country, including the isolationists, have completely accepted the heaviest tax-programme in American history. And from people who do not pay direct taxes a barrage of contributions has been reaching the Treasury. The spirit of the conscripts is splendid. The wave of strikes was very short-lived and has largely subsided. It is apparent that our labour troubles will yield to sensible mediation. Despite all inevitable mistakes and bungling the nation has achieved magnificent things in the defence-production and training already under way. The effort far surpasses results in the last war. If only the battle of the Atlantic can be taken in hand and won, there can be little doubt of the outcome of the entire struggle.

Americans followed the tragic and heroic events in Greece with absorbed interest. The circulation-manager of an afternoon newspaper in Boston told me that on days when he was able to headline some British or Greek success (and sometimes there were such) he would sell 15,000 more papers, a very substantial percentage-increase—than on the days when the Germans triumphed. This wishful support has still to be translated into final and decisive action.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Vegetable-Prices

A visit to my local nurseryman was illuminating. For whereas, some months ago, he had been willing to sell me his Sunday hat, he now greeted me with what I thought was a joke. "Anything to sell?" But I soon saw that he meant it. "Anything," he said. "Lettuces, radishes, cabbages, anything. A few flowers? A couple of dozen tulips? I'll buy anything you've got." When I replied with that casual pride which is part of my gardener's make-up that I had lettuces, young carrots and even new potatoes there was no holding his joy. I was a merchant dealing in luxuries; it was too bad that they were only for my own consumption, and after that piece of news he was a changed man. Now when a nurseryman with some acres of glass begins to beg for supplies from a private gardener there must be a very good reason. Yet this man's price for the lettuces he had such difficulty in getting was only fourpence, which was reasonable and proper. From London, however, there still comes a different story. A correspondent to a daily paper complains bitterly of the following prices asked for salad-vegetables, and with justification: Cucumbers, 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d.; lettuces, 10d. to 1s.; spring onions, 8d. (about a dozen); mustard and cress, 4d. per punnet; radishes, 8d. per bunch. To urge the public to eat more salads and yet allow the continuance of these prices is absurd. Yet every gardener has a remedy, and can make no sounder investment, some time between now and next autumn, than a few dozen clothes and at least one garden frame. The most fantastic prices for out-of-season salads will then trouble him no longer.

### Pigeon-Menace

Even some country-people are, however, short of vegetables, and I myself have occasionally been supplying neighbours who, in other years, sometimes supplied me. The main cause brings up another case in which the price of an article of food is both wrong and absurd. Tons of spring vegetables have been destroyed this year by wood-pigeons; tons more, to say nothing of agricultural crops, will probably be destroyed before the end of the summer. Yet the price of wood-pigeon in London is, I hear, at least half a crown. The situation in which the gardener is urged to grow more vegetables only to have those vegetables devoured by a bird, which in turn is sold at a luxury price because of its apparent scarcity, is too much for me to explain. At monotonous intervals, for about five years, I have been saying something about the wood-pigeon on this page. With the rat and the rabbit it is our most serious menace to food-production. Continually we have been promised organised pigeon-shoots, pigeon-weeks, and all manner of efforts at extermination: all half-hearted. And until there is a serious national campaign against the pigeon we must, I suppose, continue to foster a situation which might have delighted Butler or Swift: grow more vegetables for food, feed more pigeons on the vegetables, and then buy the pigeons back so that you have more food. In that way, as in the story of the negro who traded his horse for a load of hay and then borrowed the horse back so that it could eat the hay, we at least have what the negro called reciprocity.

### In the Garden

A broccoli called Nine-star Perennial should be grown by everyone. Sown now, it will produce next spring a solid cauliflower head surrounded by a varying number of smaller heads. These are excellent. After they have been cut, the plants should be top-dressed with manure and left to repeat their performance. The richer the soil the finer the central cauliflower will be, and the preparation of a specially rich piece of ground is well worth while for this delicious thing. From time to time people ask if the nuts of ornamental almonds are useful for food. I have always said no, partly because of their bitterness, partly because you need a sledge-hammer to crack them. I now find they are excellent in taste and much easier to shell if stored and left till mid-winter or spring. Worth remembering, I think, for Christmas-time, since they are quite equal to imported nuts. Of the dwarf-almond which I mentioned a week or two ago several correspondents have sent notes of explanation, one—my thanks in spite of the anonymity—kindly sent sprays of flower. It appears to be *amygdalus nana*—ground-almond or Russian almond, a native of Tartary.

H. E. BATES.

## A RADIO SUGGESTION

SIR.—The recent discussion in the Press and in Parliament about some "bans" (afterwards modified) by the B.B.C. on speakers alleged to hold certain unpopular opinions leads me to ask if you will kindly insert this letter going into the general question of "freedom on the radio." I am not concerned with any special political or other views as such, but only with that principle of freedom.

The radio being one of the most powerful means (perhaps the most powerful) of influencing public opinion, ought surely to aim at the maximum possible freedom of expression of various types of thought. As Mill emphasised in his essay "On Liberty," progress requires that "advanced" as well as "conventional" thought should have adequate public expression if fossilisation of the public mind is to be avoided.

There exists an impression, however, that—at any rate on philosophical and religious subjects—such is not so at the B.B.C. Talks on such matters seem to be restricted almost entirely to a few of the larger "orthodox Churches." It is, of course, only right that representatives of those bodies should have adequate opportunities "on the air"—but does it seem right that they should have what almost or quite amounts to a monopoly? There are various widely held views besides those of "conventional orthodoxy." Names such as Martineau, Lodge, Spencer, Huxley, &c., come to mind at once. Why, for example, should a fair exposition of Rationalist views be unheard on the radio? After all, it means simply forming one's beliefs by reason unfettered by arbitrary authority. That spirit seems necessary to healthy progress, even though it needs to be conditioned by a prudent check of conservatism. It is clear, then, that it should be freely heard on the radio. Perhaps the newly reorganised directorate may look into this matter.—Yours faithfully,  
J. W. POYNTER.

64 Sotheby Road, Highbury, London, N. 5.

## PARISH-MEETINGS AND COUNCILS

SIR.—Your admirable H. E. Bates has done good service by drawing attention to the importance of making the most of parish-councils at this time. I would also make a plea for parish-meetings, for many parishes like mine have, owing to their population being below two hundred, this lowest form of public body. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food have a great deal on their hands at this time, but I was sorry, when I took the chair at our own parish-meeting, to find that we had no printed matter whatever from either. Surely the usefulness of the parish-meetings and parish-councils ought to be borne in mind in Whitehall. Also the friends of popular representation want to stand by the parish-meetings and parish-councils when so much of the work of the country is being (of necessity) regionalised.—Yours faithfully,

J. W. ROBERTSON SCOTT.

"Countryman" Office, Idbury, Kingham, Oxford.

## PLANNING AS TREASON

SIR.—The following is an extract from a speech by Lord Harewood, reported in the *Yorkshire Post* on April 21st: "I submit that any energy that is diverted from the main object of winning the war, in any other direction, even that of planning for after the war, is energy misdirected; and it is difficult to characterise it under any other name except the very ugly one of treason."

I feel perhaps abler brains than mine might produce some interesting comments on this statement.—Yours faithfully,  
JOAN GIBBS-SMITH.

## "GOOD CHARITIES"

SIR.—It was decided 46 years ago in the Courts (*in re Foveaux 1895*, 2 Ch. 501) and has never been over-ruled, that anti-vivisection societies are "good charities" for the receipt of bequests and for exemption from income-tax. The chief activities of these societies at present lie (a) in attempting to prevent members of the Forces from being inoculated against typhoid, paratyphoid, tetanus and cholera, and (b) in persuading parents not to have their children immunised against diphtheria. It may be a sign of tolerance that we permit propaganda persistently directed against the public welfare, though it is necessary to subsidise it at a substantial loss to the Revenue?—Yours, &c.,  
A. V. HILL.

House of Commons.

## SICK HEART RIVER

SIR.—Why does Mr. Graham Greene in his review of *Sick Heart River* complain that in John Buchan's view "individuals are of enormous importance"? When one reads on to find his slighting references to such "great men" as Bankers, Divisional Commanders, and Ambassadors (why omit Commanders-in-Chief and Prime Ministers?) one suspects political bias. I would add that I know nothing of Mr. Greene's political views. A world that contains Hitler and Mussolini, and recently contained Lenin, does not give much support to the dogma of the unimportance of individuals. And when Mr. Greene asserts that it is by the "grace of humble men" that we survive does he remember that these also are individuals and that they need leadership? When the reviewer bewails John Buchan's "materialism" one can only wonder.—I am, &c.,  
H. M. S.

## COUNTRY LIFE

## Spring Promise

Spring has come on steadily and normally, with none of those sudden leaps which always give the country-mind cause for such gloomy pleasure. "Ah, we shall suffer for this. You mark my words, we shall suffer." Crops on the whole look well, except that there is again some patchiness among cereals on new-ploughed land. I have seen first-class fields of winter-beans full of promise; winter oats and wheat that are a delight to the eye. It is perhaps a fraction early to compare this year's fruit-blossom with that of 1940, but the promise seems slightly lighter. The cherry-orchards are just breaking white, and in a week or so will be the most glorious sight on the landscape. Heavy blossom is of course no proof of a heavy crop. A dry, calm, warm May is essential for cherries; bitter winds and frost will do great damage; heavy rain will cause the blossom to fall mouldily and not set. Against what seems to be a fairly high average promise for crops, however, must be set a rather high percentage of losses among spring lambs. One report speaks of a seventy-five per cent. loss on one day's lambs; another farmer tells me his average loss has been thirty per cent. He attributes the cause to worm in the sheep, due apparently to over-stocking.

## Wild Asparagus

It is not generally known, perhaps, that asparagus is a wild plant in England or that it belongs botanically, like the onion, to the lily family. It is rather surprising, too, that a plant which in cultivation gets perhaps more codding and feeding than any other plant should be a native of coastal districts, thriving on what the books call maritime sands. Apparently only common in the West, it is said to be found fairly abundantly near the Lizard in Cornwall, and according to an authority quoted by Florence White, at Kynance Cove in Cornwall there is an island called Asparagus Island, because of its abundance there. Solomon's Seal is a related plant, also an English native, and is said to be a good substitute for asparagus itself.

## Silage

It is about a year since I described a new and cheaper silo made of prepared grass-paper, and emphasised how important the making of silage would be. The campaign for silage had hardly started then, and it is rather disturbing to discover what the response to it has been. Molasses are an essential part of silage-making, and thirty thousand tons are waiting for the campaign of 1941, ten thousand of it specifically set aside for spring silage. Yet apparently the number of applications for molasses in quantities of over 80 gallons, for which permits are required, is negligible. It is reported that "permits for only 1,600 tons have been issued and very little actually ordered." If this means, as it would seem to mean, that only a fifth of the necessary quantity of spring silage is about to be made, then the situation is lamentable. Some short-sighted farmers are already without cattle-feed and are forced to turn out cattle at night. Others made silage, but made it wrongly, with inevitable waste. On the other hand a farmer tells me that he not only made silage of excellent palatable quality but has also been treating straw under a new method by which a solution of caustic soda makes it into an easily-digested feeding material. With the prospect of a heavy straw-crop this summer this looks like an important thing.

## In the Garden

Many crops of spring cabbage have already bolted, a total failure. The cause is too early sowing. August 15th is the key-date. Crops raised before that date will almost invariably fail; September is early enough. There are varieties of summer cabbage which will, however, mature in a few weeks. *Greyhound* is one. *Flea-beetle* is almost bound to be troublesome on seedlings of the cabbage family, and on radishes. Dust with wood-ashes at dawn, or when leaves are wet. But fortunately the garden is not all cabbage and flea-beetle, and perhaps the most charming thing in it at the moment is a very dwarf almond. Delicate pink, only a foot high, it looks very like a paler *Daphne mezereum*. It came, nameless, from an old garden in the Midlands, is apparently on its own roots, and spreads like an herbaceous perennial. Unfortunately a persistent search of the gardening-books has failed to reveal the name of this very delightful pygmy. Finally, many correspondents have written for fuller details of the method by which a reader extracted excellent cooking sugar from home-grown sugar-beet; others have given details of how they use sugar-beet, and in one case parsnips, for jam-making. With the prospect of a reasonably good fruit crop these ideas are obviously very welcome, though a great part of the soft-fruit season will be over before the sugar-beet is fit. But it is naturally useless to grow sugar-beet without a working plan for extracting the sugar. I am, however, assured by my original correspondent that her plan is highly successful, and I am hoping to give the fullest practical details of it next week.

H. E. BATES.

never be anonymous. I am surprised to find that even one member of your correspondent's great college disagrees with me about that.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,  
R. C. K. ENSOR.

### WANTED A SHAKESPEARE

SIR.—I am a gunner in the R.A. and am at the moment situated in an isolated site in Sussex, and have been finding it very difficult to obtain with any regularity the newspapers and magazines I have long been accustomed to—especially *The Spectator*; this, as you can well imagine, is bad enough for one who has always been accustomed to decent literature and fairly reliable news, but now, to make things worse, I have lost, apparently whilst on manoeuvres, my kitbag edition of Shakespeare, and I am writing to know whether any of your readers might have a copy which I no longer require, and for which I would be most grateful.—Thanking you in anticipation, sincerely,  
H. E. SHEARN.  
(c/o. Post Office, The Haven, near Horsham, Sussex.

### WHEN IS A SHOP NOT A SHOP?

SIR.—As a regular and appreciative reader of your paper may I ask you, if possible, to find space in your columns for this letter dealing with a practice which threatens much injustice in country villages? I live in a village and am registered for fats, &c., with the local grocer who has, for many years, been an enterprising and excellent tradesman. Five minutes away across a river traversed by a ferry for the sum of 1d. is a fair-sized provincial town boasting two or three large grocers' shops. These shops can obtain goods which, while not rationed, are not plentiful in these days. The owners are increasingly refusing to sell such food-stuffs to anyone not registered with them for fats. This practice is tending fast to the withdrawal from the "small man" (about whom we hear so much today) of the registering of his customers for rationed goods which, of course, means practically the withdrawing of their custom in order that they may be among the privileged who deal across the river. It seems to be that this refusal of the bigger man to sell non-rationed food should be forbidden by law. A tin of sardines is neither more nor less, for instance, than a tin of sardines, and should be purchasable by any person possessing the money to pay for it. But an arbitrary system of boycotting purchasers not "registered" is fast increasing and is surely defeating the Government's desire for even distribution of food.—I am, yours, &c.,  
COUNTRYWOMAN.

### RATIONALISED RATIONING

SIR.—The present rationing scheme becomes unjust when the alternatives to rationed foods, such as poultry and fish, are available only to those able to pay for them. The speculation in uncontrolled goods and the consequent inflation of prices is another feature of dissatisfaction to the man in the street. Both ill-effects can be remedied by the rationing of all major foods and by the controlled distribution of all domestic essentials. The production and distribution of such essentials should be established as vital factors of our war-organisation, and be subjected to conscriptive measures not less than those applicable to the fighting forces. Individuals engaged in this production and distribution should be paid salaries for their services and not depend upon private profit. In this way rations would be uniform to both rich and poor. Speculation would disappear, prices become stable, inflation discouraged and a much clearer relationship defined between production and consumption.—Yours truly,  
H. L. KENWARD.  
36 Lady Byron Lane, Knowle, Warwickshire.

### MISS BUTLER ON RILKE

SIR.—Miss Butler's book on Rilke may be as bad as Mr. Geoffrey Grigson thinks, but when a critic attacks an author's style he should at least be careful of his own language. "A cathedral made of old allotment sheds we too much forget would not be the equal of Wells or Gloucester or even Truro." I do not "too much forget" anything of the sort, for I never thought anything so absurd. "That is one assumption on which the author thinks about Rilke" could hardly be expressed more clumsily, nor is "Miss Butler troubles to deny" a very happy phrase. These, among other sentences, makes me wonder whether Mr. Grigson is really a reliable critic of style. And that leads me to doubt whether his ferocious onslaught on the matter of the book is justifiable.—Yours, &c.,  
W. LANGDON-BROWN.

### A USE FOR OLD BOTTLES

SIR.—In your issue of April 11th "Janus" asks if there is really no use for old bottles. The answer is that in a number of districts there are special bottle-exchanges which deal with beer-, mineral-water and milk-bottles, and with some other types; plans are now in hand for developing the cleaning and the re-use of other kinds of bottles. Such types as cannot be handled economically well, as "cullet," be used as raw material for the manufacture of new bottles. In regard to his own collection, I suggest that "Janus" might inform this local Council and ask them to remove it.—Yours faithfully,  
H. G. JUDD, Controller of Salvage.

Ministry of Supply, Gt. Westminster House,  
Horseferry Road, S.W. 1.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Sugar-Beet Sugar

Before giving the promised recipe for the extraction of sugar from sugar-beet I must give readers fair warning of a snag of which I knew nothing when writing last week. This is that people manufacturing sugar or syrup from sugar-beet are required to pay excise-duty on the manufactured article. A word of inquiry at the local excise-office is therefore essential. Three other points. It appears that thousands of people have responded to advertisements offering a small quantity of sugar-beet, together with instructions for sugar-extraction, for the sum of 6s. or 7s. They are free to pay that if they choose! It is important also to obtain seed of selected stock. Otherwise the sugar-content may be very disappointing. The season for lifting sugar-beet grown commercially is November, it might possibly be done in October. Thus anyone who hopes to make sugar for summer jam-making is going to be disappointed. Apples, crabs, blackberries, marrows, quinces, and late raspberries are almost all the fruits that will be in season when the beet is ready. At the same time the sugar is, of course, good for ordinary cooking. Whether under these conditions sugar from sugar-beet is really worth while I do not know; possibly the use of the Campden solution for preserving fruit without sugar is preferable. I am only fair to say, however, that my correspondent is successful with her method of sugar-extraction, and I therefore give her recipe. The method, which seems to require little but patience and some pretty large cooking-utensils, is admirably simple. "Scrub the beets, cut into pieces and put into a saucepan, well cover with cold water, bring to boil and simmer for three hours. Strain through a colander, put juice into saucepan, bring to boil, simmer very slowly until a dark syrup is formed. Time: six to seven hours." From two ounces of seed (any good seedsman) my correspondent grew enough beet to make fourteen pounds of syrup, but I imagine that with really skin-flint sowing and extra good cultivation much more would be possible. My grandfather grew sugar-beet in days when it was very much of a novelty, winning an all-England prize with beet which were certainly far larger than the average commercial beet of today. Sowing should be done this week, rows fifteen inches apart, seeds two inches deep. Thin to twelve inches; alternatively sow two or three seeds every twelve inches and thin to one plant. Some idea of what really thin sowing can do will be seen in a later paragraph.

### Rural Elections

To my recent note about parish-councils another point is worth adding. The election of councillors in rural districts has been suspended for the duration of the war, and in some cases this has meant that parishes are left without representation on the rural-district council, which is, of course, the real governing body behind the parish-council; and the only real governing body for those villages which, as the editor of *The Countryman* points out, are too small to have anything but a parish-meeting. In the case of my own village the rural-district representative left the village at the outbreak of war, yet remained living in the rural-district area. He therefore continues to act on the rural-district council, and yet in all respects, especially that of sympathetic interest, ceases to be our representative there. Yet the emergency precludes any possibility of our putting forward another councillor, and we are, in a sense, disenfranchised. Meanwhile, the old public indifference goes on. At the annual parish-council meeting, held last week, not one person turned up to discover why there was a twopenny increase in the rates or what work the clerk did for his magnificent salary of £5 a year. Nor was there any witness to the unrewarded zeal of two councillors, both of whom had been away on business since morning. One had eaten nothing since lunch, the other nothing since breakfast. Yet both turned up without waiting to get a meal—"Just so," as one put it, "we could keep our 100 per cent. record."

### In the Garden

A country-gardener working a small market-garden gives me some good tips on onions, and also an example of what really patient and expert finger-and-thumb sowing can do. With one ounce of onion seed I myself sowed about 70 yards this spring. But with two and a half ounces of seed this market gardener sowed no less than 857 yards. Last year from two ounces of seed he grew a total harvest of nine hundredweights of onions, or a return of about 8,000 ounces to the ounce. From such a grower tips are worth having. For example, his onions are hoed every week, if possible, on the same day of the week, and from this regular attention he gets more regularity of growth. In some seasons, particularly wet ones, onions will make more leaf than bulb. Pinch off the superfluous leaves until only three remain and bulbs will fatten accordingly. Autumn-sown onions will tend to seed, but pinch off the seed-stalk early and the bulb will successfully mature. This gardener also grows onions, as many country-gardeners do, on the same piece of land year after year. Those who are faced with the impossibility of working any good rotational-crop system should remember this, and may take heart from another gardener, who tells me he has grown potatoes in the same piece of land, with excellent results, for a quarter of a century.  
H. E. BATES.



more sustenance than a large meal hastily devoured." This principle, known in more recent times in America, from the name of its rediscoverer, as "Fletcherising," is in reality older than Count Rumford, for Luigi Cornaro, a Venetian nobleman, decided, after a serious illness at the age of forty, to restrict his diet, first to twelve ounces of solid food daily and later to an egg a day. That this practice, which he recommended in several famous treatises, had no deleterious effects upon his health may be gathered from the fact that when he died in 1686 he had reached the ripe age of ninety-eight years. It is to be hoped that severely reduced rations may not be necessitated by war-conditions, yet would it perhaps be part of wisdom, in countries whose food-supply is reduced or threatened, to publicise anew the possibilities latent in this usually overlooked method? If unsuspected energy may eventually be released by smashing the atom, how about the results of a comminution of the average mouthful?—Yours sincerely,  
ARTHUR STANLEY PEASE.  
22 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

### CLASSICAL PREMIERS

SIR.—Sir Richard Livingstone in your May 9th issue, in referring to those Premiers whose classical attainments did not, *se judice*, entitle them to the name of scholar, states that "perhaps the most curious case is Lord Balfour, the finest intellect of all, to whom the classics seem to have made no appeal," and humorously suggests as a possible cause that he may have been overdone with Latin verse at school.

The real reason, I think, will be found in *Lord Balfour's Autobiography*, p. 8, where he states, in referring to what he styles "the mediocrity of my scholastic career," "The fact is, that I had no gift for languages, no liking for grammar, and never acquired sufficient mastery of the classics to enjoy them as literature. I detested the weekly task of writing bad Latin prose; I detested even more the weekly task of composing yet worse Latin verse. Through no fault of my teachers, I failed to master either Greek or Latin."—Yours obediently,  
D. S. CHISHOLM.  
Ness Bank, Inverness.

### "A SAD HISTORY"

SIR.—"Janus," in his foot-note to my letter of the 16th (in which I clearly said that it was the coroner's report and not Mrs. Woolf's account which I criticised) states that, though I said I was not criticising her, I in fact was, and to prove this he writes "Mrs. Woolf was reported as saying 'I cannot carry on.' Mrs. Hicks says 'Where shall we all be with this sort of 'I cannot carry on?'" His is a false inference. Mrs. Woolf was never reported as using these words—see Mr. Woolf's letter. It was I, and I alone, who used them, as a summary of the coroner's remarks. "Janus," in trying to prove my lack of charity, throws a boomerang. May I say here that we should probably agree that the coroner's verdict was the only one for any cause of suicide?

1. We cannot see into the heart and mind of another. A suicide faces the truth with his Maker alone.

2. It is kind to the relatives.  
But to say one person is more "sensitive" than another is unkind to others, for, again, no one can ever measure another's sensitiveness.—Yours faithfully,  
KATHLEEN HICKS.  
*The Old Palace, Lincoln.*

"Janus" writes: "The *Sunday Times* report, on which Mrs. Hicks stated her original letter was based, recorded the words, "I cannot go on." I freely make a present to Mrs. Hicks of any deductions to be drawn from the difference between that and "I cannot carry on."

### WILD ASPARAGUS

SIR.—Your admirable H. E. Bates' (if a landowner may endorse the characterisation of the Editor of *The Countryman*) is a little vague about *asparagus officinalis*, the wild English plant which differs from the cultivated plant only in size and consequent succulence. The remote rumour which has reached him that "at Kynance Cove in Cornwall there is an island called Asparagus Island" can no doubt be verified by scores of your readers, besides myself. It is an immense rock of serpentine, with a small area of turf rich with thrift and other spume-loving plants on its top. There the asparagus used to grow. My father, a keen botanist, found one plant there when I was a boy, the first to be found for several years and, for some years after, the last. Showing visitors the asparagus had been the crowning triumph of the local guides, who in pre-motorcar days made the most of few clients. Another *habitat* was the Brill, the grand headland to the west of Kynance. Inspired by that find on the Island my father and I—it was in the early '90s—clambered down part of that frightening cliff, but had no further luck.

May personal knowledge of Kynance Cove be a delight awaiting Mr. Bates after the war! He should choose a day when bright sun allows the Lizard seas their proper brilliance of turquoise and opal, and a ruffling sou'-westerly flecks Mounts Bay with foamy white and drives its waves at racing speed up the silver tawny beach which is piled against the brown, red and purple serpentine cliffs. What a nostalgic dream of colour and light Mr. Bates' innocent paragraph has evoked in these grim drab days!—Yours, &c.,  
W. M. EAGAR.  
*Choir House, Dean's Court, E.C.4.*

## COUNTRY LIFE

### A Farmer Speaks

If you have never heard of the Icen Estate and the remarkable experiments in land-regeneration carried on there since 1932, I think sixpence on *I Believe* by a Farmer (R. G. M. Wilson, 285 Milton Road, Cambridge) would be well spent. There is something more important here than the review of a practical, if revolutionary, farmer's achievement in creating a great agricultural unit which now employs no fewer than 556 people. One has heard much of those thousands of Dutch lights (9,000 on the Surfleet estate alone), the Indore system of composting and the new methods of marketing and packing produce—so much that I for one look forward to seeing, one day, this remarkable outside vegetable-garden for myself. But this pamphlet raises other problems. Is there really to be an agricultural revival after the war? If so, on what lines? On those of Surfleet? Or on those of the official mind, which wants everything to be done in terms of the "economic proposition"? Or through State ownership? Capt. Wilson thinks the last, and with it State-controlled education and medical service, which are of course allied problems, since a nation's health arises from the quality not the quantity of the food it eats and in turn from the health of its soil. And what of the potential 5,000,000 men of the services? What of them, indeed? It seems to me, as it seems to Capt. Wilson, that there had better be some very hard thinking. And this pamphlet gives a pretty sound idea of what that thinking ought to be.

### Wholesale Loaf

When I first asked my baker, the most courteous of men, for the wholesale loaf he replied, "Ah, but I doubt if you'll like it," and went on to relate stories of other customers who had asked for it and had been disappointed. The second time he replied that anyway it was "the same as our own ordinary brown." I hear of similar experiences. The loaf is either unpopular, unwanted or difficult to get. We decided finally to make our own. This turned out to be excellent stuff, but generally drier in texture than one would have liked. This also seems to be a general experience; perhaps there is a tip for getting a loaf of moister, closer texture? Another thing against home-baking is that the labour of kneading wholesale dough twice a week for a sizable family is just sheer hard work. Yet the wholesale loaf was never more needed, and there was probably never a time when there were so many means of popularising it. There is no bread like it; certainly not "our ordinary brown." But is the campaign for popularising it all that it should be? Dare the Ministry of Food revise the process of telling the public how excellent this bread is by telling them exactly what white bread isn't? Is the public generally acquainted, for example, with milling processes? Does it know, I wonder, that not only is the germ taken out of its white bread but that the addition of water is, in the words of an expert, a profit-factor?

### Basket-Making

During the last war the Dutch were able to seize a great part of the osier- and basket-trade of this country, and keep it. Later the osier-trade had to meet competition from the Argentine. For many years the Dutch were sending produce here in baskets so cheaply made that they were non-returnable. Sold in Covent Garden at sixpence each they could be bought by the fruit-grower at tenpence. The English basket-maker could not compete; the price of making, exclusive of materials, was around one-and-twopence for a similar basket. There is now, of course, no Dutch competition, and English basket-makers are flooded with work and short of hands. This is good, for basket-making is in no sense a revived or exclusively arty craft, but a good, honest, skilled operation that defies mechanisation. The purists have lamented the passing of traditional designs and so on, but I still get satisfaction out of the thought of a craft that still has its own City company and probably makes a contribution to more trades, from hop-picking to butchering, fishing to gardening, than any other.

### In the Garden

It seems to me that we cannot hammer too much at the serious question of vegetable-prices. The local price for parsnips is fifteen shillings per cwt., the London price twenty-five; i.e., double and treble that of potatoes. In a country-town (multiple stores) indifferent lettuces are, at the moment of writing, still tenpence; my indifferent tomato-plants are (multiple stores again) double the price of those offered by expert nurseries. What the fantastic figure of 60s. for a dozen bunches of spring onions means, as quoted by the daily papers, I don't know. Are we all the victims of a stunt? Alternatively is there a psychological explanation of a situation in which the public cares little for an article at twopence but is mad to get the same thing at tenpence? For example, it sounds fantastic, in these days of labour-shortage and other difficulties, to hear a customer at a green-grocer's order by telephone, for delivery, one lettuce. The season has certainly been difficult (two days at least enough to make every gardener weep), but by the time these notes are read my gardener should be gathering his own salads. Meanwhile it is comforting to hear that vegetable-prices are to be the subject of parliamentary questions  
H. E. BATES.

then went down with the illnesses against which they were told they had been protected.

It is not only wealthy old ladies or unsophisticated Members of Parliament who are fighting the attempts of medical dictators or a clique of interested bacteriologists to foist inoculations on the public, but men and women who know what they are talking about and have experienced the bad effects of these inoculations and their failure to protect from disease.—Yours faithfully, L. LOAT,  
Secretary, National Anti-Vaccination League.

25 Denison House, 296 Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W. 1.

### ADDING INSULT TO INJURY

Sir,—If "Janus" is interested in mis-shapen and ill-constructed omnibus words, may I draw his attention to the fact that in official Ministry of Health circulars, air-raid casualties who have to undergo amputation of a limb are designated briefly as "amputees"? Surely this is a superb example of adding insult to injury.—Yours, &c., ANNE HARRIS.

29c Pembroke Crescent, W. 11.

### THE MEANING OF RATIONALISM

Sir,—If not too late, may I comment on some remarks in "A Spectator's Notebook" in your May 2nd issue? They occurred in a review of *The Rationalist Annual* for 1941, your contributor drawing attention to mistaken quotations, in that magazine, of certain prayer-book phrases. The mistakes are, I believe, very commonly made; but of course are none the less regrettable. It is perfectly true that much prejudice has been aroused against the Church of England by the notion that the prayer-book inculcates a kind of "feudal" acquiescence in our present station, whatever it be. Perhaps the prejudice has been encouraged by the fact that the Established Church often has shown that tendency in practice.

The chief object of this letter, however, is to express a view that prejudices of this sort are due to a remediable cause. The prejudices, in fact, are not confined to any particular party. If some more rigid "Rationalists" misunderstand Christians, do not many Christians misunderstand Rationalists; and, indeed, do not Christians of one type misunderstand Christians of other types? It is all a result of people's confining themselves too much to their own special environment. They become "insular."

As to Rationalism, the word calls for careful definition. I always use it, myself as meaning simply "forming one's beliefs by candid reason, rather than by arbitrary authority." If such definition is correct, it would follow that anyone who reasons honestly is a Rationalist. Of course, I must not forget that the term Rationalist is commonly taken as having a more restricted connotation, namely, as the name of those who disbelieve in the reality of any alleged supernatural Revelation. I would make, however, a distinction. If there has been a Revelation, pure reason, honestly employed, will prove that fact; while, on the other hand, if there has not been one, the same pure reason will disprove the allegation. In either case, the conclusion which ultimately turns out to be the right one is really "Rationalist," that is, in accordance with right reason. True!—but we must distinguish between "essentials" and "non-essentials." The essential element in Rationalism is simply its principle of going by reason, not authority, in forming beliefs. The question of what particular beliefs are vindicated when that principle is carried out is, though important, secondary in logical order.

If Rationalists of various types, and Christians and others of various types, go together more, there would be fewer prejudices and more progress.—Yours faithfully, J. W. PONTNER.

64 Sotheby Road, Highbury, London, N. 5.

### "I AM TOLD"

Sir,—The perversion of a simple statement of fact can undergo by the time it reaches the "I am told" stage pass belief. Here is a sentence from a letter addressed to the British and Allies' Comforts and Victims of War Fund: "I have been informed from a reliable source, who got it from a well-known journal, that you are running a disreputable fund, with no auditor and no committee, trying to get money from a gullible public under the names of so-called patrons, who know nothing of your nefarious deeds." The basis for this is a paragraph in which I observed of this organisation that its printed appeal made no mention of a committee or treasurer, and added "I have no doubt that all this is excellently meant, and that the accounts are properly kept and duly audited, but an appeal carries more weight when some reference is made to such formalities." I had, in fact, satisfied myself before I wrote at all that there was no imputation to be made against this fund, but I hold that when any organisation is appealing to the public for money it should fortify itself with a treasurer, committee and auditor, and say so. My criticism does not go an inch beyond that, and I should be sorry if this particular fund suffered in any way from mischievous misinterpretations of what I wrote.—I am, Sir, yours, &c., JANUS.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Herb-Collecting

When I first introduced the subject of medicinal-herb collecting last year, quoting what seemed to be the fantastic prices which the wholesalers were then paying for such common plants as dock and dandelion, I believe many readers thought that they had only to seize a fork, start digging and so pile up a fortune. Correspondents are still writing to ask me if it is true that docks and dandelions can be sold for £5 or £6 per cwt., and if so how and when do they start? I must apologise to all those correspondents for not replying, and I hope they will understand the reason. The reason is that the collecting of medicinal herbs, formerly imported largely from abroad, is far from being a simple business. Until I could give more practical details, a better idea of current prices and of the wholesale druggists' demands, it seemed useless to reply. Now that I am able to give these details I must still point out that herb-collecting, though it is a nationally important thing and may be an extremely profitable thing, is not a pastime for making easy money. The prices of herbs are still attractive (red rose-petals £30 per cwt., lily-of-the-valley flowers £35 per cwt., fox-glove seeds £40 per cwt.) and herbs are still urgently needed, but there are certain rules which must be observed in collecting, drying and packing the produce, and unless they are observed herb-collecting may be a very disappointing farce. This does not at all mean that herb-collecting by amateurs is to be discouraged; on the contrary the Government, the directors of Kew Gardens, the Pharmaceutical Society and the Wholesale Drug Association have all taken the greatest interest in this extremely important business.

### Warnings and Advice

One of the results of this expert interest is a booklet. It is impossible to think of any potential herb-collector getting along five minutes without it and I should recommend any interested reader to send for it: *Herb-Gathering*, by Barbara Keen and Jean Armstrong (Brown and Schimmer, 4 Leather Market, S.E.1, ninepence). The authors are practical herb-farmers; the publishers are wholesale druggists. There is a foreword by Dr. W. O. James of the Department of Botany at Oxford, a glossary of medical terms, a bibliography, a detailed description of about seventy herbs with their uses and seasons of harvesting, some really sound advice in collecting and drying and some enchanting woodcuts from *Illustrations of the British Flora*. The text is non-technical. Some of the information may have, and in fact should have, a calming effect on enthusiasts who are not prepared to work hard. For example, most herbs lose about 80 per cent. of their weight while drying. Thus 10 lbs. of parsley are needed to make 1 lb. of the commercial herb of bog-bean, 16 or 20 lbs., of dandelion-roots 7 or 9 lbs. Herbs should never be gathered while wet or immediately after rain; they should never be heaped together or, like lawn mowings and hay, they will heat; they are useless unless colour has been preserved; they bruise easily. Drying in this country, except in the case of sphagnum moss, can never be undertaken out of doors, and indoors some kind of artificial heat is always essential and success will depend almost entirely on the kind of drying-methods, and structure, that is used.

### Organisation and Prices

Clearly herb-collecting is a case for communal organisation. Women's Institute branches are obviously just the thing; schools under efficient guidance, could do a great deal. And since the ideal drying place would be a hop-kiln or oast-house it looks as if the south country, with its earlier season, ought to be the largest centre of activity. I have no idea how many commercial herb-farms there are in the country. Miss Armstrong and Miss Keen are at Valeswood Herb Farm, and there is a well-known herb farm at Seal, near Sevenoaks. Visits to these farms, and others, would obviously save many trials and tears. In addition, centres of organisation are, I believe, already working in many counties. Finally, more prices: belladonna-leaves 225s. per cwt., rosemary-leaves 56s. per cwt., lime-tree flowers 112s. per cwt., mint leaves 112s. per cwt., elderberries 56s. per cwt., couch-grass root (yes, indeed!) 56s. per cwt. These are the prices offered for herbs carriage paid to Messrs. Brown and Schimmer in cases where collectors cannot co-operate with County Central Collecting Depots of the Women's Institutes. The peak season for collecting is June to September.

### In the Garden

Since herb-collecting is so important (it should be remembered that almost the entire source of pre-war supply from the European Continent has long since been cut off) it seems worth while examining the possibilities of herb-cultivation in the garden. Here again expert advice is available and should certainly be taken before there is any rash up-rooting of the herbaceous border. Bulletin No. 121 of the Ministry of Agriculture deals with *Medicinal Herbs and their Cultivation*. (H.M. Stationery Office). Many of the most urgently required herbs are easily cultivated and many will come readily from seed. H. E. BATES.

trees alone, but in oaks and other hard-woods; (2) that, in the regional house-planning that will occupy our energies for years, after war is over, we should seriously consider the desirability of the complete "non-timber house." Given good architects, these houses of the future ought to be artistic in design as well as a saving in wood-stuffs. The matter only needs being ventilated in the Press for it to be attended to and, at the right time, acted upon. Perhaps the idea is even now being talked about. If so, it is all to the good, for the timber shortage is certain to become acute before long.—Faithfully yours,  
E. H. BLAKENEY.

Orchard Lawn, Winchester.

### "CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION"

SIR,—While in no way wishing to detract from the fundamental importance of the principles enumerated by Mr. Davis, I feel prompted to ask whether he is justified in claiming these principles as specifically Christian. Are they not, in fact, principles which would be upheld by a majority of ethically minded persons, whether they adhere to the Christian or to one of the other great religions, or belong to no orthodox religion at all; and is not the foundation on which they rest a belief in the sanctity of human personality rather than the doctrines of any one religion? If this be so, is it not, perhaps, a little pretentious of Christians to claim them as their own, and is the statement that this war is being waged in defence of Christian civilisation one which is likely to appeal to members of the Jewish faith or to those supporters of the British cause who may happen to belong to one of the other non-Christian religions? In this connexion it might not be inappropriate to quote some lines from Kipling:

"His God is as the fates assign,  
His prayer is all the world's—and mine."

—Yours faithfully,  
2 Charlbury Road, Oxford.

MARY C. BIGGS.

### "AMPUTEES"

SIR,—It is excellent to have many people watching over the purity of our language, but how often they seem to be shocked at the wrong thing! After all, language is made for man, and not man for language. In times of rapid change it is not well to coin new words for new things? Such a process does not degrade a language. It enriches it. "Omnibus" was a good invention; "bus" followed naturally; and "debus" is both useful and neat. What could be better than "amputee," instead of "one who has to undergo amputation of a limb"? The fact that a language is capable of growing in such ways is all to the good. It is one of its merits. The actual method of formation may sometimes raise a smile (and there are limits), but the horror expressed seems to me often merely pedantic. What does really degrade a language, impoverishing instead of enriching it, is the ignoring and rubbing off (as it were) of the delicate distinctions between words of kindred meaning, such as "anticipate" and "foresee," for instance. There Mr. A. P. Herbert has before now given us a lead. Let our purists concentrate on that!

Gramere.

J. P. MALLESON.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Another Farmer Speaks

"The average inhabitant of this island knows less about soil, on which he depends for his existence, than about wireless-telephony." "Our pre-war imports of food used to run to over £400,000,000 a year, our home production of food was valued (wholesale) at about £250,000,000 a year. There were still many who had insufficient to eat." "The mean rate of soil-formation is estimated at 1 inch in 10,000 years," yet "the Missouri basin has lost an average of 7 inches of topsoil in twenty-four years, the biggest new Californian desert has advanced in places forty miles in one year, destroying 2,500 farms. Australia is probably going faster, much of it the best farming-land, to house-schemes and roads. . . . gone for ever." Another farmer is speaking: trying to tell his fellow-men, in terms of plain fact and plain common-sense, that the fundamental source of their existence is in danger from ignorance, cynical exploitation, selfish interests, lack of policy, plain stupidity and slackness of heart. He is Mr. G. Goddard Watts, and his pamphlet, *An Agricultural Policy for Britain* (Allen and Unwin, 15s.), ought, if it did not happen to be a damning reflection on much official policy for the past twenty years, to be an official pamphlet. I cannot recommend too strongly the excellence of its plea for a thriving agricultural community that is not simply a prosperous industry, but a sociological necessity: a plea addressed to both public and farmers alike, another warning that, unless we are very careful, "British agriculture after the war will experience the same disasters as befell it after the war 1914-18."

### The National Loaf

Judging by the correspondence I have received, many people besides myself have had difficulty in either getting or successfully making the wholemeal-loaf. (In many shops the loaf is dammed by the label "Standard Bread.") Nearly all these letters contain simple and excellent tips for baking. One, originally the recipe of a miller's wife, is so good that I give it in full. The period of making is five minutes (we have frequently set aside a whole evening for a moderate baking). Ingredients: 2 pints very warm water, 3 lbs. flour, 1 oz. yeast, 2 ozs. granulated sugar, 2 ozs. salt; method: mix ingredients well, pour on water, stir as for plum pudding. No kneading. Set mixture to rise in tins for one hour; bake for one hour. The bread thus made is certainly excellent. Finally, a doctor provides a nice comment on the intelligence of the age. All you need to do, he says, is to see your nearest miller, ask him for a supply of wheat-germ, and put it back (10 ozs. to 7 lbs. flour) into the flour from which it has been so carefully extracted. No need to use wholemeal-flour. Wheat-germ costs 3d. a pound. It is also sold as — (a well-known proprietary article, whose vitamin percentages make one dizzy) at 2s. 10d. a pound. Are we really sharp? as they say in the country.

### The Angling Season

By the time these notes appear, the angling season for coarse fish will be almost open. June 15th is the official date. Apart from the extraordinarily tranquillising effect of angling itself (I find it the only thing to have kept me more or less sane for the last twelve months) are fresh-water fish worth while in the kitchen? They are, of course, eaten very largely on the Continent, but prejudice is strong with us. From a study of Ambrose Heath's *From Creel to Kitchen* (Black, 2s. 6d.), I imagine that prejudice is fairly well justified in the case of about 50 per cent. of our English fish. Eels, perch, pike and trout are all good; carp, roach and even tench are more than dangerous possibilities. You will find that Czechs, and indeed most central Europeans, speak of carp with reverence, and that even in England there are tench-epicures. Both pike and perch are white-fleshed fish, and Ambrose Heath quotes a French cookery book as saying that "after the salmon trout, the perch is the most delicate of river fish," and that they are excellent filleted, when large enough, and served cold with a mayonnaise-sauce. Pike (remember they may easily go up to 20 lbs.) have a great reputation in all Continental countries, and *From Creel to Kitchen* contains thirty very aristocratic recipes from Russia to the Cote d'Or. Finally, an appeal to those who own private lakes, streams or even ponds stocked with fish. About the middle of June anglers get a kind of fever for which there is no cure except rest, rest and water. Even the army cannot kill an angler, and thousands of soldiers who were grateful last year for permission to fish in country places will be doubly grateful now.

### In the Garden

Your celery trenches (not too deep) should be ready now. If they are fairly widely spaced remember that a quick-growing crop can be sown on the ridges: French breakfast-radish, short-horn carrot, Tom Thumb lettuce, dwarf-peas, seeds of biennials. Sow swedes now. They will stand the winter and yield excellent green tops in spring. And try at least one of the kale: sprague, drumhead, labrador, Hungry Gap or another. All give excellent tender shoots in what is probably the most difficult period of the vegetable year—March to May.

H. E. BATES.

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had the misfortune to remain within the German Reich has been testified by many impartial witnesses. In England Mr. Lamy, correspondent of *The Times*, and Mr. Mackenzie, correspondent of the *Morning Post*, have given prominence to this subject. And the German Socialist newspaper, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, has added the following commentary to the report on the murdering and torturing of Silesian Poles in German prisons:

This is called German Kultur! It is a disgrace before the world and even before the most ferocious American tribes. One has to be ashamed of one's German origin before the whole world.

I cannot hope to persuade Dr. Dawson to change his mind with regard to Poland. It is deeply painful to read his remark about "the inveterate lawlessness of the Poles." This champion of justice for the Germans apparently shuts his eyes on all the crimes, perjuries, and wrongs perpetrated by the Germans throughout their long history—of which Poland and innumerable Polish individuals were the chief victims.—Yours faithfully,  
DR. MARIAN OSTOJA.  
58 Hurst Street, Oxford.

### A PSYCHOLOGICAL ERROR?

SIR.—Like your correspondent Mr. J. L. Hodson I am feel concerned by reports of the lack of materials in our factories at the time they are required and by absenteeism and other evidence of bad organisation. But, unlike Mr. Hodson, it appears to me that all the inefficiency he mentions would be impossible in a factory run for profit. No such concern would allow men to remain idle for lack of material and any live employer would have long ago countered absenteeism if it benefited his pocket to do so. Can it be that the cause of this inefficiency is the absence of the profit-motive from our aircraft—and other large factories due to the extreme nature of our Excess Profits Tax?

It may be deplorable that patriotism is not in itself a sufficient motive for strenuous effort, but I think there is plenty of evidence that many people who are willing to die for their country are unable to keep up the constant effort of work without direct benefit to themselves. When there is no profit to be made the owner of a factory, harassed by Government officials, is all too ready to throw in the sponge and let the officials do the worrying. The result is that in the middle of war management is passing from those who have proved their capacity, by surviving under peace-time conditions, to an unproved bureaucracy. Probably the most dangerous experiment a country at war has ever indulged in.

I recognise all the evils of some people making money during a war while others lose everything they possess and perhaps also their lives, but I am not arguing the ethics of allowing profits to the efficient but the war-time necessity of doing so if we want increased production. In any case there is a difference between making money out of war-time shortage or incidental advantage and obtaining a fair reward for giving us more aeroplanes, armaments, food and other necessities. We do not rely on patriotism only in obtaining more effort from the worker, we give him increased rates of pay, especially for overtime; to the farmer we give higher prices to induce him to put more land under the plough, but to the armament manufacturer, the most vital man of all, we say something like this: "We want you to turn out 200 planes where you formerly made 100. We will see that you get nothing out of it."

Such departures from common sense will not win wars but it may lose them. It seems to me that those who forced the full 100 per cent. rate in the Excess Profits Tax were thinking more of the class-war than the war against the Nazi.—Yours faithfully,  
Springhead Farm, Crossborough, Sussex. GEORGE WINDER.

### "CRETE POST-MORTEM"

SIR.—May I comment briefly on the article "Crete Post-mortem" in last week's *Spectator*? In one breath Strategicus speaks of the solid bastion of Cyprus, in the next he asks whether Cyprus is a solid bastion. Assuring us that all others are mistaken, he gives the "real reason" and later the "true explanation" of the defeat in Crete. The real reason was not lack of materials but inferiority of purpose: the true explanation was inferiority in machines and men. Finally, the profit and loss account of Crete "incontestably shows that the balance is on our side." The Americans may have a word adequately to describe such writing. I can find none.—Yours faithfully,  
St. John's, Worcester. H. E. HAWTIN.

### A QUESTION OF BRICKS

SIR.—Whatever else we may or may not want when this war is over, it is certain that we shall need every brick that is to be had. One would therefore think that every brickworks would be working full time already and storing up any bricks which it cannot dispose of immediately. This does not, however, seem to be the case. A recent announcement made by a company in the Thames Valley stated that owing to lack of demand for their products they had decided to close down altogether. Moreover, I was informed the other day by a local builder that another brickworks not far from here is not producing at the moment.—Yours faithfully,  
A. B. DALE (Captain).  
Ivon House, Broad Chalke, Wilts.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Kent Front

"We cannot understand," writes an American friend, "why you are still in Kent." From friends in other parts of England there continually comes the same expression of concern and wonder. So it occurs to me that perhaps both Americans and those English people living outside Kent may like to know how Kent really looks, or has really changed, after almost two years of war. Two things at once strike me. First, the land looks, on the whole, more prosperous and, if possible, more beautiful than ever. What the pattern of pink apple-orchards, hawthorn, chestnut-wood, beanfields and buttercups looks like to an airman I have no idea. To those living among it there is no fading of the old luscious, prosperous air that is hard to match anywhere in England. Secondly, I am impressed by the fact that in the country, at any rate, few people have left. From this Kentish village, out of a population of 250, only three people have gone; and I suppose ten times that number have arrived. And for those who measure the prosperity of rural life by the prosperity of rural industries Kent is encouraging. Flowers are stripping the bark from fallen oaks; flax, rotted and darkened by spring rain, stands in shocks, like a miniature harvest; new spiles and hurdles of chestnut, peeled to a clean cream, seem thicker than ever in the yards of hurdle-makers. Fruit sales are beginning, advertisements want cherry bird-men, strawberry-pickers, shearers, ditchers, waggons, horsemen, basket-makers. In the woods the wild rhododendrons are glorious, and by the sleepy ponds of the Weald small boys sit angling for little roach among the claret leaves of water-lilies. Even the salvage has been collected at last.

### Late Spring

It is no secret now that the spring has been bitter, backward and extremely treacherous. The frost of May 16th was almost, but not quite, as severe as the frost of exactly the same day in 1935, when 20 degrees was commonly registered. Hudson's date of May 18th as the day on which the English countryside looks at its best seemed to be just about a month wrong. It seems as if much fruit, cherries especially, has suffered; probably apples have escaped. Yet there is a prodigious crop of hazel-nuts and another of holly-blossom. Beans were sown in early May, but are now good and strong and sweet. Flax and peas, of which there are quite unprecedented sowings in the south, both look good: both a bright, tender green when young, and from a distance hard to tell apart. Both are lovely additions to the flowering crops of the countryside. In contrast to last year, grass now looks richer and stronger than ever seemed possible a month ago. (Can't we do something about the thousands of luscious miles of grass road-verges in this country?) Finally, after a spring-time that seemed to be all ice-wind and drought, some honour should be paid to the blackbird. He has out-sung every other bird in the countryside. If May was arid and bitter, he sang with all the rich heart-break of all the May-times that ever were.

### Herbage Seed Production

To a recent note on ley-farming I must now add a word on Sir George Stapledon's *Herbage Seed Production* (Welsh Plant-Breeding Station, Is.), which is complementary to the same authority's bulletin on ley-farming. Grass, to most of us, is just grass. But as students of Sir George Stapledon's theories will have gathered, grass is a crop, capable of an infinite variation of strains suitable for differing soils and situations. In regrassing and the development of good leys—"particularly of high-grade, relatively long-duration grazing-leys"—the supply of sufficient quantities of proper grass-seed is of great urgency. A large-scale home-production of varieties such as Italian ryegrass and "Danish" cocksfoot is important if correct three-year planning is to be carried out. In this booklet the whole technique of grass- and clover-seed production and harvesting is expertly handled.

### In the Garden

The campaign for digging up lawns is renewed. There never seems to be a corresponding campaign for paths. The general Edwardian lay-out seems to have been a path of three or four feet running entirely round the plot. A single central path, except in very large gardens, is entirely adequate. The space saved will be found to be surprising. Such changes, together with a little intensive intercropping, fewer vegetable marrows (great space-wasters), and certainly in small gardens fewer potatoes, will yield far better results at this season than lawn-digging. Tomatoes, as often pointed out here, should now be planted in liberal quantities. They may follow early lettuces, and in turn be intercropped with later sowings of lettuce, a dwarf-variety being chosen and left untrimmed. Nurserymen often set out outdoor tomatoes at three trusses of fruit, carefully bend the plant to an almost horizontal position and then ripen under cloches. In any case, stop at four trusses and feed with liquid manure, good vintage. A path fifty feet by three feet would comfortably accommodate, if dug up, fifty tomato-plants. Cost about ten or twelve shillings, yield probably not less than 150 pounds of fruit: a good example of what can be done.  
H. E. BATES.

## THE THEATRE

"Rise Above It." At the Comedy. "Actresses Will Happen." By Walter Ellis. At the Apollo.

At last we have a revue without those mysterious weak spots (how is it that they survive rehearsal after rehearsal: the sentimental song that just sags like a piece of damp washing, the joke that nobody laughs at, the dance-scena of killing seriousness in a mauve light?). The *Hermiones*—Baddeley and Gingold—have certainly risen above all that, carrying the rest of the cast in their grotesque and sublime flight. Miss Gingold's wit is bitter and narrow, with a kind of hate of her subject: the girl who goes to lunch-time ballet ("I like some Robert Helpmann with my lunch"); the lady in the Liberty dress who gives a little talk about music with illustrations. Miss Baddeley's wit, on the other hand, is wild and genial, the unrestrained poetry of absurdity. See her as an old lady-*evacuee* up in London for the day to choose a hat, a little hoarse under the appalling head-gear, but game to the gamey end. See her, too, as the famous Chelsea model, all black velvet and undone fasteners and extraordinary bulges and aged energy, trying in vain to seduce a new young painter with green Chartreuse ("I've been etched in Montparnasse, water-coloured in Venice, engraved in the Fulham Road, and, of course, oiled everywhere"). And see both ladies lead a cadaverous and faded cast in a savage parody of an E.N.S.A. entertainment for the troops. ("You can't go wrong with a nice bright song.") One would like, too, to pick out a fine macabre number, "Truth," sung by Miss Virginia Winter, the gentle humble amiability of the compeere, Mr. Wilfrid Hyde-White, and the charming sentimentalities of Miss Carole Lynn. As for Mr. Walter Crisham, I confess he is one of my blind spots. I cannot bear his hideous little short jackets and his general air of sleekness and passion—a cross between Mr. Noel Coward and Miss Dorothy Lamour.

*Actresses Will Happen* ought to be passed over in silence. There is only one saving grace—that is the beautiful performance of Mr. Herbert Lomas as the old school-friend, the over-consulted and the over-relied-on, with the false teeth that don't quite fit and the pipe that's always going out. GRAHAM GREENE.

## THE CINEMA

"Cheers for Miss Bishop." At the Regal.—"That Uncertain Feeling." At the Gaumont.

There are times in the cinema when it seems as if the highest American traditions all derive from the same person in a number of different disguises. This protean figure is always recognisable by his self-abnegation, by a life-time of sacrifice rewarded with a demonstration of public affection. The Hollywood school of historical biography has presented this symbol of the American ideal in a wide variety of male rôles—as famous statesmen, doctors, scientists and explorers; and now in similar style comes Miss Bishop, of Midwestern College, to show us what she was able to contribute to American education during fifty-two years of service on the faculty of this famous American university. Unfortunately, we learn more about what this distinguished woman failed to contribute to matrimony by unluckily (or stupidly) missing three opportunities of marriage. Miss Martha Scott, excellently graduating from *Our Town* into the name-part, is compelled to spend more screen-time in sacrificing her personal happiness than in demonstrating the educational aptitudes which were presumably her strongest interest. From time to time in *Cheers for Miss Bishop* we are reminded that Midwestern, bringing education to the immigrant communities of the corn-belt, was doing a dramatic job in assisting their assimilation into the United States, but the film is primarily a sentimental piece presented skilfully enough to disarm both cynic and historian.

*That Uncertain Feeling* seems to have been produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch after a re-examination of his earlier films to see what used to be funny about them. With the result that he has recaptured the form with none of the spirit. Here are all the old tricks—what used to be funny sub-titles accompanied by what once was witty music. But, shades of *Trouble in Paradise*, whoever expected to see this mountain of humour bring forth a mouse of polite laughter? With Merle Oberon miscast and Burgess Meredith under the impression that his part called for Groucho Marx, the occasion would be a sad one, if it were not for Melvyn Douglas, who does succeed in extracting some fun from this old story of the unromantic businessman who wins back his wife from a romantic genius who would just as soon have stolen the silver. EDGAR ANSTAY.

## COUNTRY LIFE

## The Triumph of the Egg

Trying to ration eggs is rather like trying to ration cabbages. There is no means of checking, acquiring or stopping the back-yard supply. Thus no scheme of egg-rationing, except one in which there are more egg-inspectors than eggs, can ensure equality of supply for all. How a scheme so full of difficulties is going to work successfully it is impossible to say. In normal times the village poultry-keeper works partly under a system of communal collection. He sends the bulk of his eggs to the collecting-centre, keeping back enough for himself and his local customers. For some time he has operated a system of voluntary rationing, allowing half-a-dozen eggs per week per customer. Now he will send all his eggs to a collecting-centre and get, in return, somebody else's eggs for his own customers. In these days of transport-difficulties this seems fairly mad. The first result of it is that the local poultry-keeper, priding himself on his own produce and not knowing the quality or age of the eggs he is made to sell will refrain from applying for the necessary licence. The local shop-keeper has his own objections: more coupons, more bother and the knowledge that half his rationed customers have ducks or hens in the back-yard laying a comfortable supplementary supply. The town-grocer doesn't want anything to do with it, and urges you to ration in the country. The Minister of Food certainly has a tough job, and perhaps he could do worse than read, before he is much older, that fine sad story of Sherwood Anderson's *The Triumph of the Egg*.

## Young Mouths

How often are young birds fed, and how many times in the course of a day? Only the very patient observer, watching from dawn to dusk, could, I suppose, give an approximately reliable answer. But even a very casual observation, first of a tom-tit's nest in a hole in a stone wall by a Pitmaston Duchess pen, and secondly of a young cuckoo in a hedge-sparrow's in a hedge of *lonicera nitida*, gave a little idea of the miraculous energy of the process. The pace at which the young tits were fed seemed to vary between visits of thirty seconds and four minutes. Occasionally both parents arrived with food together. Both were extremely nervous, and it is probable that, left entirely alone, they returned more often than every two minutes, which seemed a fair average. This represented thirty visits an hour, or apparently, allowing a fifteen-hour day in midsummer, between four and five hundred meals a day. The young cuckoo seemed, if anything, to be fed rather more frequently: often once a minute, rarely less often than two minutes. The average seemed to be about forty times an hour, or apparently between six and seven hundred meals a day. This is prodigious when it is remembered that, though there may have been as many as eight or more young tits to be fed, there was only one cuckoo. None of these figures is advanced as a proof of anything, incredible though it seems, and how many miles of flight each case represented it would be still more difficult to say. But it has been reliably estimated that a pair of long-tailed tits might travel, in a fortnight of nest-building alone, something like 700 miles.

## In the Garden

"Sow anything" might be a good rule for June. "Plant everything, transplant everything, hoe everything" another. Transplanted onions will grow large; but small onions have the virtues; they can be cooked whole, used more economically, will sprout less in storage and keep better altogether. To anyone growing leeks for the first time the method of planting may seem odd. Make a hole, ten or twelve inches deep, with a crow-bar, drop in the leek and leave it, uncovered by soil. With rain the leek will root and the hole gradually fill up. In dry weather a little water may be given at planting time and at intervals afterwards. Again, leeks transplanted from boxes will grow large. I see that a well-known canning expert has been saying that celery is available for "only a few weeks of the year": a slight misstatement. A hundred and fifty heads of celery keep my family comfortably supplied from October to March, a season that could be easily extended by earlier sowing and the use of a pink variety another month or more. Sow wallflowers (trying something else out of twenty available colours other than *Blood Red* or *Cloth of Gold*), and indeed all biennials now; and remember that indoor primulae and cinerarias are easy now from seed. Keep the cinerarias always out of hot sun and give them a cool room in winter. H. E. BATES.

the community will replace it. It is only the same logic to say that, when the community forcibly reduces a man's earning-power, or deprives him of his normal livelihood, it should make good the deficiency.

Widespread distress is only avoided by the action of many employers in "making-up" gross military earnings. The Government itself gives a lead in the case of the Civil Service. But many such grants are partial, or restricted to senior executives or men with families; the man whose employer is unable or unwilling to make a grant, or who has been in business on his own account, bears the full burden himself.

There may be two sides to the argument about the pay of armament-workers. It is hardly arguable that the whole dispute is exacerbated by the very notable differences between munition-workers and soldiers, between reserved and unreserved occupations, between "deferred" and "non-essential" men. Some will indeed plead for an extension of the principle of paying peace-time earnings to all in reserved occupations, indeed to the whole community; though this policy admittedly involves practical difficulties.

It is commonly objected that such a measure would discourage men from seeking military promotion, and so diminish efficiency. In fact it would do so much less than the present system. For the gross earnings of a private are his own; the earnings of most officers are subject to certain considerable deductions, of which the messing-allowance is chief. The War Office and Air Ministry issue quantities of publicity about commissioned posts, detailing remuneration, &c., but are officially unable to give any answer to enquiries about compulsory expenses essential thereto—a sufficiently absurd position. There seems considerable evidence that a man who takes a commission is actually worse off through doing so; at any rate, this is very widely believed, and numbers of men with families refrain from applying simply because they believe that increase in earnings will be more than offset by higher compulsory costs.

Much more is this the case with the man whose salary is "made up." For since any increase in his army-earnings is counterbalanced by a decrease in the "making-up" figure, he is simply and obviously the worse off by the total amount of the expenses attaching to a commission. In effect, the Government says to its own employees, and to all those who by luck or ability have obtained jobs with generous employers, that they must serve in the Forces, but must take good care not to get any post of responsibility. It is difficult to see how this system furthers military efficiency.—Yours faithfully,  
Solihiull, Birmingham. D. WILMOT.

### WAR-TIME SPORT

SIR,—May I be permitted, in reply to Mr. W. M. Lodge's challenge, to say that, of course, I am not opposed to war-time sport except when it is overdone? I had hoped that when the climax of the professional-football season was reached, with cup finals attended by 60,000 people in England and 90,000 in Scotland, with the teams travelling the length of the country to take part, we had seen the end of "business (as nearly as possible) as usual." Since then, in this of all war-time summers, we have had the scandals of the Derby and cricket's recent bad example of a representative match at Lord's in which first-class players, presumably, had been drawn from stations all over the country. I was not in England much during the last war; but it is my recollection that after 1915, when it was appreciated that we were really up against something serious, organised sport was mainly of a local character involving a minimum of travel and time off from work of national importance. Could not that excellent precedent be followed now? As to the presence of staff-officers my remark was inspired by the gnawing fear that many of them do regard cricket as a "busman's holiday."—I am, yours, &c.,  
117 Bishop's Mansions, S.W. 6. F. M. ISWOLD.

### "MUDDLE, MESS AND MAKE-BELIEVE"

SIR,—In fairness to the Food Controller, the suggestion that he shows more regard to vested interests than knowledge of working-class budgets is rather wide of the mark. Some of the best years of Fred Marquis (now Lord Woolton) were spent as Warden of the David Lewis Settlement and Hostel in Liverpool, where his portrait in oils occupied the place of honour in the Clubroom when I knew the Settlement well.—Yours, &c.,  
22 Biltner Street, E.C. 3. EDMUND S. BIRD.

### WILL TO LIVE

Painful is life to all that dies,  
and stern the living word "Arise,"  
the banishment, the angel's sword  
that makes the grave our only peace.

My life is yours to take, not mine to save,  
to love too great to know, love I must give—  
You, Angel, will as life, and not as I,  
longing myself to live, will but to die.

KATHLEEN RAINE.

## COUNTRY LIFE

### Land-Experiment

There are many market-gardens; few which have any value as experiments in land-regeneration. A week or two ago I mentioned Captain R. G. M. Wilson's pamphlet, *I Believe*, and the Icen estate at Surfleet in Lincolnshire which is the practical basis of that creed. Books are one thing; green crops are another; and after reading the book I have now been to Lincolnshire to see the crops. Captain Wilson has been called an impractical idealist. The reason? Eight years ago he took on 300 acres of Lincolnshire siltland. The place was virtually farmed out; it was choked with weeds; its wage-bill was £120 per week. Today its wage-bill is £175 per week; it has a manure-committee drawn from its own workmen; it has its own canteen and club-house; its 1940 sugar-beet returns were 27 per cent. above the national average; its 1941 returns per acre run into three figures; three-quarters of an acre of it has already produced, in the first six months of the year, 30,000 lettuces and 1,500 carrots of bunched carrots. All highly impractical. How is it done? Apart from impractical idealism one of the secrets is composting. Every waste cabbage-leaf, all weeds, in fact all green waste that comes off the land is composted under the Indore system and eventually goes back to the land. The fertility of the Surfleet soil improves visibly every year, and the proof of it is not only in cash-returns but in the glorious glowing green of the crops. No artificials are used and it is not surprising that the charge of impractical idealism comes mostly from the vendors of such commodities. Indeed, if this is impractical idealism, then England needs a ton of it per acre.

### Produce and Prices

As Sir George Stapledon has pointed out, any revolution in farming must come from the land itself. Politicians, who know generally little about agriculture and care less, have always delighted in the stock-answer, "What's the use of a programme for agriculture? The farmers themselves don't know what they want!" Once farmers have produced their own revolution we shall have a very different situation. At Surfleet it can show that revolution: a revolution of which the basis is simply higher soil-fertility produced by the soil itself and without the aid of chemical combines, a more intensive production, a more intelligent marketing of produce, a more intelligent and more equitable relationship between man and master. Today there is only one Surfleet; but there is no reason why a thousand Surfleets should not operate, bringing fresh produce nearer to the great centres of industrialism, thus breaking down high freightage-costs and bringing fresher and cheaper produce to the public. In Lincolnshire, by the way, they regard the present high prices for vegetables as iniquitous. They are glad of control, as in the case of tomatoes. This spring the profits of growers have been abnormally high—with no benefit to anybody, either producer or consumer, except E.P.T. Before the war the Lincolnshire grower fought hopelessly against a subsidised-Dutch industry which could export lettuce to this country at far below the cost at which either the Dutch or English growers could produce them. Today he makes profits, says goodbye to them and sees the consumer pay.

### The Triumph of the Cat

At this time of the year, when young plants of all sorts are being set out, rabbits are perhaps the country gardener's greatest nuisance. There are few rabbit-proof plants, many protective measures. But so far I have discovered nothing so successful as a good lean cat. In March young rabbits begin to squirm their way into my garden for the usual meals of pillow-shoot, cabbage and wallflowers. Silently and systematically the cat caught them and laid them, unscarred, on the kitchen door-mat. No more rabbits have since been seen on the inside of the fence. But outside the cat goes on silently and systematically tracking them down and laying them, sometimes small, sometimes as large as herself, on the kitchen door-mat. What are we doing, drowning kittens? In the intervals of supplementing the household meat-ration the cat occasionally has another job. She acts as sheep-dog to the ducks. As they come home from the pond she rounds up the stragglers, until they make a brown orderly line, neck-deep in buttercups. There never was such a self-supporting person in the family. And, finally, why do cats sleep in cat-mint? For there, after the labours of rabbit-catching and duck-shepherding, she is always lying, in blissful siesta, her white nose buried in violet flowers.

### In the Garden

Start a compost-heap. The compost-heaps at Icen estate are elaborate affairs—large pits, brick-drained, with systems of ventilation and light-railways to bring up the waste-produce and take back the resultant compost to the land. But any garden can and should have a simply run heap. Into it can go grass-movings, weeds, flower-stalks, kitchen-waste, even kale and cabbage-stalks. If layers of horse-manure can be incorporated so much the better. The internal heat produced in the pit will be enormous, and the heap should be turned at intervals. No decomposing agents are necessary, and finally a compost of high nutritive value—rich, non-smelling, heavy in humus, clean and profitable, will be produced.  
H. E. BATES.