

The Tortoise had the

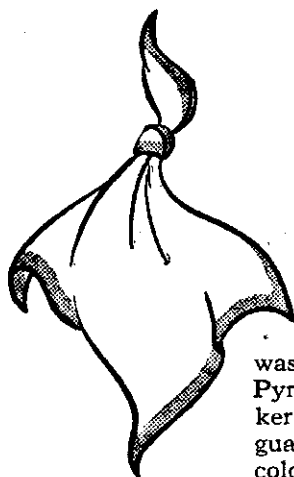
Right Idea



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LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 7)

INTERRUPTED OPERA

Sir,—If H. W. Schofield can at one moment listen to Azucena telling Manrico in dramatic recitative how she nearly burnt him alive in infancy, within two seconds be praying for someone in the Forces, and within a few more seconds switch his thoughts back to *Il Trovatore*, then I don't believe prayer means to him what he pretends it does. If he wants some hundreds of people who are listening to a local performance of a grand opera for the first time in a year to fall to their knees at a given moment and pray for the fighting services he won't get them to do it by rudely and rashly disturbing their enjoyment of good music with a gramophone record of the noises made by a clock they have never seen. And if he has not observed that allowing "Silent Prayer" to become a mere mechanical routine may make a mockery of any meaning the "period" may have, then he is not even remotely acquainted with the nature of prayer—Matthew, VI, 5-7 seems clear enough to me. It is H. W. Schofield who is selfish. For those who can switch prayerful thoughts on and off at will, plenty of other stations are to be had at 9 p.m.

MISERERE (Wellington).

Sir,—"Miserere," in dealing with the observance of silent prayer each evening, refers to a dramatic moment in a well-known opera. It is an infinitely more important moment when a sincere Christian lifts his heart in prayer to Almighty God and fervently asks that a righteous and lasting peace may speedily come to the world.

The trouble with this prayer observance appears to be that it is badly managed. Parliament, when in session, practically ignores it—at any rate, the voice of whoever is speaking, can frequently be heard after the chimes have begun. It should be remembered that the idea, commended by His Majesty the King, His Excellency the Governor of New Zealand, and others, was also approved by our Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser. I wish Mr. Fraser would see to it that the observance is carried out in a respectful and orderly way.—GEORGE INGRAM (Christchurch).

Sir,—I would suggest that your correspondent, H. W. Schofield, of Tinui, re-read "Miserere's" letter quietly and objectively as it was written. He will then see that "Miserere's" objection is not to the idea of two minutes' silent thought and prayer but to the very real danger of it becoming mechanical and ritualistic and in that way defeating the purpose for which it was conceived. Mr. Schofield should not find it hard to believe that there are those who do not need the nine o'clock reminder for their thoughts to dwell on the tragic suffering and waste in an otherwise civilised world and to remember with a very real sorrow those who are bearing the burden and paying the price. It is because of this and because they regard such things as Verdi's *Il Trovatore* as in some small degree a symbol of the finer things which alone can bring nations together in a common emotional and spiritual experience, and so lead us along the road

(continued on next page)