

LISTENER

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Mr. Churchill

EVERY newspaper reader has heard of the sub-editor who used his biggest type for a local event and then hanged himself because he had nothing left for the Last Trump. If we don't know that version of the story we know another, since the variations are legion. But all have the same moral — the necessity of keeping something up one's sleeve for a greater occasion — and it worries us as we think this week of Mr. Churchill's birthday. It would be easy to say the things that are normally said about a great man who has lived for seventy years. But Mr. Churchill is not merely still living: he is still working — working on the biggest job that has fallen to an Englishman since Pitt. He is Britain's greatest war leader since Pitt; and some think of all time. If we measure greatness by the danger and the bitterness of the struggle, see it against the risks we have run and have now almost surmounted, it is difficult to take any other view of his leadership than that of his most ardent laudators. But the fact remains that his race is not yet run. If we crown him now, the laurels will look second-hand next year, or the year afterwards, or whenever our enemies are finally overcome. It will not be a question of eating our words, since his glory is already secure, but of finding new words to say the same thing. So it is safer to greet him soberly; to thank Heaven that he is still equal to his staggering burden, and survives his mistakes as easily as his flashes of genius. For the key to his hold on all sections of the community — after his courage, wisdom, imagination, and strength — is his frank, and often flamboyant, boyishness. He is never too solemn to laugh or too wise to be foolish; and it is to be hoped that the day will never come when he loses interest in his own ego. Until then he will not be old whatever the calendar says.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MASSES OF BACHS

Sir,—Your correspondent, H. R. L. Blanks, in advocating the purchase of Bach's Mass in B Minor, does not perhaps realise that the placing of this order is but a small part of the time and trouble the Broadcasting authorities must spend on this recording before it could be made acceptable to the New Zealand public. As I listened recently to the broadcast recording of *Don Giovanni* it occurred to me that if Disney and his friends have revealed the beauty of classical music used as a background to a fantasy of moving cartoons, we in New Zealand have shown that it is equally suitable as a background to a human voice moving in a vivid running commentary. From the music alone I am sure that I would never have gathered that anything exciting was happening, but with Mozart's so-called climaxes cleverly "faded out," and a convincing voice assuring me that "this is a most dramatic moment," I knew exactly where I was.

I have glanced at Bach's Mass since it became the subject of controversy, and it seems to me that though the music is in Bach's usual tedious, square-cut style, the plot has definite possibilities. If the authorities here have time to edit the recording, working up the dramatic aspect and rendering the musical elements less conspicuous, we should have a work of high entertainment value.

It is with some diffidence that I enter this controversy, for I understand from previous correspondence that to decide which of the prolific Bach family wrote which of their prolific works is a business which often confuses even the experts; and we may find, after wasting much ink and paper, that we are all talking about different Masses in the same key, written by different people of the same name.

D.F.T. (Auckland).

WARSAW

Sir,—The publishing of my not exactly appreciative letter regarding your attitude towards Warsaw proves that you do not resent criticism. Your postscript, however, shows at the same time that I have apparently not stated my point of view quite clearly, which induces me to write once more and make it more explicit. I wish to emphasise that I did not expect you to take sides or to pass a verdict in a case you consider doubtful. I wanted only to point out that in a case which seems to be of major importance, a responsible journalist should not remain silent, but raise his voice—if only to express his doubts.

If the Dreyfus affair or the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti produced — and rightly so — such a stir-up of public opinion, then the case of a great city condemned to death with all its inhabitants deserves, according to my mind, a much more violent reaction. It is the Press, as the exponent of general feeling, that can contribute in such circumstances most effectively to the settling of the dispute; not necessarily by condemning one side or another, but by demanding the establishment of facts and by clamouring that justice should not be meted out posthumously.

What would have become of Dreyfus if Zola or Clemenceau had adopted the passive, waiting attitude advocated by you in the case of Warsaw? Are they to

be classed as fanatics or frauds? They were perhaps fanatics in the cause of truth, but it should not be forgotten that it is to such kind of fanaticism that we owe a very large part of our moral, scientific, and social achievements.

L. HARTMAN (Wellington).

[If we are to rush round demanding victims for every act of injustice, on the principle that any decision is better than none at all, it is going to be a much more dangerous world for innocent people than it already is. Our correspondent should have asked what would have happened to Dreyfus if Zola and Clemenceau had not waited until they had the facts. He would, of course, have died in the prison to which fanaticism and fraud, with the aid of ignorance, had already committed him.—Ed.]

"THE BLACK PRINCE"

Sir,—I have just risen from listening-in to a final instalment of that splendid serial *In the Days of the Black Prince*. A short time ago, I was delighted to learn that its author was an old friend, Bill Holder, and wrote expressing appreciation.

In his reply, written just a few weeks before his tragic death, he gave this interesting information: "Owing to the war playing up with the cast, I have to chop and change the story as this or that one disappears into the blue. Sir Guy Pauncefort is a relieving mate in the merchant naval reserve, and he disappears for months at a stretch, so the story has to be bent to please him. Now our Simon Strongbow threatens to disappear for two months, and we have to go like fury to record as much of him as possible. But you will appreciate these difficulties."

I did. Now it is sad to realise that Bill's active and fertile brain has ended so abruptly.—TOM L. MILLS (Feilding).

SCIENCE AND FAITH

Sir,—Professor Polanyi pictures the whole continent of Europe as plunged in the slough of materialism while Britain and America kept the lamp of idealism alight. Materialism has been responsible for the decay in morality, he says. I see no reason to suggest that the general standard of morals now is lower than it was. Even granted that such is the case, it would be unwarranted to ascribe it to the growth of materialism. All science is based on a materialist foundation. It is in fact the scientific attitude. Unfortunately the word materialism is used in another sense meaning a selfish, grasping outlook on life. The two meanings are quite distinct but are badly confused in your contributor's article.

The remarks about Nazi Germany too are quite misleading. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Nazism has no scientific basis. Nothing could be less scientific than the Nazi racial theories which have given rise to such persecution. It is not a scientific attitude to burn books on Mathematics and Physics which do not accord with the official viewpoint; to expel famous scientists and to worship the old gods of Teutonic mythology.

Finally, I cannot accept the idea that science is concerned with faith. Science is that body of organised knowledge which can be tested and verified by experience. It has no need of faith to support its propositions. To accept the

scientific tradition implies no act of faith. It works. That is the test of its validity.—A.R. (Dannevirke).

Sir,—I have just read "What Has Gone Wrong?" by Michael Polanyi. I wish to say how much I appreciated the opportunity of reading it: his summing up seemed very fair to me.

I had only one fault to find: being an intellectual, he did not seem to realise that the masses do not gain their knowledge direct from scientists but indirectly from teachers of science. The majority of teachers can only teach facts, so sooner or later they are obliged to teach as facts what scientists with more humility would hesitate to accept definitely as facts. I do not feel competent to discuss the matter, but would like to quote from Donald Culross Peattie's *Flowery Earth*. He is speaking of his education in science:

"They brought discipline to cap the sprouting of youthful convictions. They taught us to postpone judgments, to acknowledge mistakes, to mistrust your own work, and give cordial credit to others, to assume nothing general from particular instances, to search for contrary evidence as if it were pearls; to walk all round a question, to define a problem, to finish what you begin. These are some of their commandments and if we did not keep them any better than God's, mercy shown to the ignorant could no longer be ours."

NOT GOTLESS (Green Island).

HYMN REQUEST SESSION

Sir,—I want to endorse "A Country Youth's" letter in your last issue. I know a hymn request session would be much appreciated. We used to have some beautiful hymns from 12M on Sunday mornings. And why did we get only Handel's *Messiah* from the less important stations last year? Surely a wonderfully inspiring oratorio like the *Messiah* is worthy of our very best radio stations?—COUNTRY COUSIN (Cambridge).

CAGED WILD ANIMALS

Sir,—Granted that it is most reprehensible to capture adult wild creatures and cage them. At the same time is there not a lot of pharisaical nonsense talked about it? For instance, how many are bred in captivity and actually owe their existence to people interested in them. I should hesitate to compare their housing with a prison or their keepers with warders. Even the fox, grouse, pheasant and our bunny owe their existence to man's clemency. Is my canary constantly yearning to fly the fields? Even suppose he has vague yearnings, is a dreamer, aren't we all? Nor would I admit the claim of universal beatitude for wild things until their universal jumpiness is explained away. The whole lot of them are perpetually on the defensive: always on the *qui vive*, or am I wrong? QUIS (Tokanui).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Stranger" (Lower Hutt): (Mr.) H. Martin, 33 Hansen Street, Wellington.

E. C. Bridges (Sandringham) and John (Dunedin): Space for a political discussion of the Jewish question; not for a religious discussion.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT

Mrs. Findlay (Martinborough): Facts being checked.