

JANUARY 5, 1945

Peace Plus

PATRIOTISM, Edith Cavell said, is not enough. Is peace enough? In the opinion of our readers it is not. Although 30 to 40 people are not even a handful of our reader group, not a big enough number in themselves to represent anything or anybody, they become representative when they all begin to say the same thing. The men and women we asked about 1945 were not chosen at random—there is some degree of selection in everything we do if we are awake and sober; but they were not chosen in the hope that they would say something that we thought we knew in advance. If we had been foolish enough to believe that we “understood” any of our contributors their answers would have made nonsense of our thoughts; but that is not the kind of discrimination we allowed ourselves. Our desire was to get variety into our answers, and we therefore exercised choice to the extent of selecting addresses from which we thought we should receive different replies. We did receive different replies, but nearly every contributor said directly or indirectly that peace is not enough, and victory not enough. Some were less hopeful than others, but none as depressed as we expected they would be in the face of Runstedt's offensive and the civil war in Greece. It was interesting also that not one was blindly and fanatically optimistic. But the more cautious they were the more important it began to seem that few were content with the defeat of Germany and Japan and the return of absent relatives and friends. It is a fine thing to convert the worn-out weapons of war into the brand-new instruments of peace, but it has been done before. Our contributors said quite plainly that this will not satisfy them. Far less will it excite them. They are almost afraid of peace alone, and even when they do not know what they want in addition, they do know how insecure military victory alone will leave them. It is a profoundly encouraging sign.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS**WHEN CHILDREN SING**

Sir,—I read with a great deal of interest an article by one of your staff reporters entitled “When Children Sing.” I have re-read it to find out wherein it was, so I thought, destructive; and I think I have found it. Criticism, to be of any value should be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. It should be impersonal and constructive. One might add that in dealing with any performance by children there is the psychological side which is so important that it cannot be overlooked.

Children learn by repetition, particularly music such as choir work. They learn to sing a certain way because they have confidence in the teacher. Now to destroy that confidence in any criticism of the finished product is a serious offence against both teacher and children. To make my point clear one cannot read paragraphs 3 and 4 on page 13 without seeing a definite criticism of the teacher concerned. No school or teacher in this country would teach (or “let,” to quote your critic) children to sing or speak as he stated in “Drink to Me Only.” I was there, and certainly did not hear anything approaching what he suggests. Therefore his criticism becomes a matter of opinion. I agree that purity of vowels is essential for all choral work. But listen to any choral society: do you get it? I could cross swords with your writer on the use of “ai.” I much prefer “ah” with a closing consonant completing the word “thine.”

Your critic says that “several songs were taken far too fast.” Tempo is a matter of taste and judgment. If your critic will turn to page 928 of the *Oxford Companion to Music* he will read, regarding tempo: “In fact, what matters is not the tempo the performer actually adopts, but the tempo that the listener is led to imagine he is hearing, for whilst in science things are what they are, in art things are what they seem.”

When the Grenadier Guards Band was in Christchurch they played the music for the morning service at the Cathedral. The tempo—speed—at which they took the hymns left everyone well behind. I asked Major Miller after the service why he did so. “Oh,” he replied, “tempos are all being speeded up in England now.” Who was right, the Guards or the people? Some years ago a number of English conductors went to America as guest-conductors. On the journey over they decided to increase the age-long tempos at which some of the choruses of *The Messiah* were taken. Critics howled, but the public liked it. Who was right? When Henri Verbruggen and the N.S.W. State Orchestra toured New Zealand in 1919-20 they combined with the choral societies in Auckland and Wellington for the production of *The Messiah*. Some of the tempos differed a good deal as taken by Colin Muston and Temple White and then Henri Verbruggen. But the latter did not say that either or both of those gentlemen were wrong. He merely said, for I was there, “Ladies and gentlemen, I would like you to take it my way, as I am conducting now. Thank you.” Who was right?—H. GLADSTONE HILL (Wellington).

[Our staff reporter replies: “I cannot see why criticism should be ‘impersonal.’ A critic tries to do by a sort of remote control just what a conductor does, and Flight-Lieutenant

Gladstone Hill must know that he would be superfluous if he were impersonal. I do not follow the remark in his second paragraph to the effect that my criticism would have been more than mere opinion if he had happened to think the same way.

“As for tempo, it is absurd to ask ‘Who was right, the Guards or the people?’ Both may have had the right speed for their own purposes. But a tempo is too fast if it is beyond the power of the particular performers to make the music (and words) intelligible at that speed. The tempos used by the choir in question might conceivably have been suitable for a smaller, more agile medium, though one would hardly recognise Holst's ‘I vow to thee my country,’ scamped through at that rate, for the broad tune it is in *The Planets*.”]

SCIENCE AND FAITH

Sir,—Your correspondent A.R. denies that science is concerned with faith. “Science,” he says, “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 requires no act of faith. It works. That is the test of its validity.”

Jeans or Eddington would have been more cautious, for the mere fact that a scientific hypothesis works is no guarantee of its validity. We accept the mole-

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cular and atomic theories as a working hypothesis, and their acceptance simplifies and tidies things for our systematic minds. But what is an atom? Jeans says it is a push or pull in nothing, an abstract lopsidedness. It would appear to have no ultimate existence. So then, by an act of faith, I accept the atomic theory because it works, it appears to explain the facts, and gives me a feeling of security. But at best it is only an analogy, an anthropomorphism to explain the inexplicable.

To me, faith itself, to use A.R.'s own words, “can be tested and verified by experience.” It works. That is as good a test of its validity as any scientific theory. So both “science” and “faith” share the common uncertainty of all things. The man who lives by faith is as likely to arrive at the truth as the man who must weigh and test everything in the laboratory. More likely, I think, for Jeans reminds us that the universe is “more like a thought than a machine.”

WARREN GREEN (Ngaruawahia)

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

Sir,—Your correspondent A.M.R. has performed a valuable service in pointing out that “teaching what Christianity is

and has done is another matter altogether” from “religious observances.” But that “teachers themselves do not understand Christianity” is not the only reason, though it may be the main one, why they cannot give information about it “in as objective a fashion as they teach the rest of ‘social studies.’” Another reason is the ease with which ill-feeling is stirred up on the subject—not necessarily ill-feeling between denominations (though that is not non-existent), but certainly ill-feeling. I agree with A.M.R. that it is part of the State's duty to see that such information is imparted; but would add that it is part of the Church's duty to teach people to be less “touchy” about what teachers say—less ready to demand their silencing when their teaching does not suit them—and to set the example in this direction.

Nor am I sure that his reasoning is sound in the earlier part of his letter. He writes, “If religion is a part of proper living it should be an integral part of school life, which is an early stage of living and a preparation for later stages.” To yield A.M.R.'s conclusion, his last premise must mean that “school life” is the whole of the “early stage of living” to which he refers. If life at school is even then only a part of life, it may not be the most appropriate part into which to introduce religious observances: and even supposing it were, the ends in view might be better served by demanding subsidies to Church schools rather than religious observances in State ones.

ARTHUR N. PRIOR (Military Camp).

SUNDAY NIGHT

Sir,—It is, I think, a generally accepted principle that on Sundays no entertainments, films, concerts, etc., should conflict with religious services. Some concerts and other form of amusement (mainly for the benefit of servicemen) are held on Sundays, but even then they are not permitted to start until church services have finished (i.e. until after 8 p.m.). Most people will agree that this is as it should be in an allegedly Christian country. Why then is it that the largest instrument for entertainment and education we possess—the broadcasting service—regularly broadcasts during church hours on Sunday mornings and evenings feature programmes which are very popular and can only be considered as direct competition to the religious services being broadcast by other stations?

I would like to appeal to the Director of Broadcasting to arrange that these special “feature” programmes be not put over between 11 and 12 in the morning, and more especially between 7 and 8 on Sunday nights.

I do not suggest that no alternatives to the church services be broadcast during these times, and would like to make it quite clear that I am referring only to feature programmes and serials such as the Bob Hope Show, Charlie McCarthy Show, Jack Benny Show, and others broadcast by the ZB stations at 7 p.m. each Sunday. Other stations often put over radio plays on Sunday evenings between 7 and 8 also—2YD, 3ZR, and sometimes other B class stations. Also 2ZB regularly broadcasts a *Diggers' Session* at 11.30 on Sunday mornings and this morning (November 26), 3ZB even broadcast a Sports Talk (including racing results?) at 11.45 a.m. “NOT A SPOIL-SPORT” (Wellington).