

## Our Own Country

EVERYTHING that makes us sensibly aware of our own country is good. Everything that makes us forget it, or apologise for it, or complain about it, or indulge in snobbish regrets about it, is bad. All these things some of us continually do, and it is a duty therefore to draw attention to such a wholesome influence in the other direction as the *New Zealand Geographer* may some day become. We say some day because the history of serious periodicals in New Zealand is not exactly exciting. *The Geographer* has yet to take root firmly enough to survive periods of storm and of drought, but the second number is better than the first, and the first was very good. To begin with, it has a well written and beautifully illustrated article on New Zealand's weather — how to know what is coming, how to say what is coming, how to prepare for it and adapt ourselves to it; since forecasting involves all those things. That article fills 20 pages, and the next ten are filled by a summary of a discussion on population—whether the world has too many people or not enough, whether a nation can, by taking thought, permanently increase in numbers or permanently shrink, whether there is such a thing as an optimum population, and if there is, what the figure would be for New Zealand. And then from the weather and the population the editors turn naturally, and very urgently, to the covering of the land itself—not the forest covering this time, but the tussock, fern and scrub that originally clothed more than a quarter of our total land surface. To this problem they devote 15 pages, some of them highly controversial, but all focusing attention on the changes fire has already made in our environment and on the appalling further changes (the editors think) it will make soon if we do not learn to control it. The editors may be right or wrong, prophets or mere alarmists. The point is, their subject all the time is New Zealand and New Zealanders, our own country, our own people, and what they and we can do to protect and enrich it.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### "FREEDOM OF THE AIR"

Sir,—Your correspondent M. Finlay states that skeletons of modern men have been found in deposits as old as, or older than, those in which remains of fossil men have been found, but he gives no instance and quotes no authorities. In any case, that does not settle the problem of the Java and the Peking fossils. The original owners of those jaw-bones and bits of skulls were not apes, and they were not men as we know them. What were they?

A.W. (Wellington).

Sir,—G.H.D. takes me up on the question of morality. There is one cardinal immorality beside which all other transgressions must take a minor place. That is, to interfere in any way with Man's search for truth, to stifle free discussion, to implant in child minds the idea that they must believe this or that or suffer terrible consequences in some future life, and deliberately to poison the wells of truth by mixing scientific facts with unscientific nonsense and by quoting the opinions of so-called "authorities" instead of facts. Religious organisations do this thing and are fundamentally immoral. Their influence on broadcasting policy, however, as another of your correspondents has pointed out, does not in any way reflect the support accorded them by the public.

C. T. WILLIAMS (Kaiapoi).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Christian" seems to have a peculiar definition of reason. If a scientist or philosopher states that every effect must have a cause, then reason is the process by which the nature of this cause is postulated; the accuracy of the reasoning would then be tested by the strength of the hypothesis formed to stand against the consistent attempts of scientists to falsify it. "Christian's" cause of this wonderful world of ours then is not a result of testable reasoning, it is but an "ad hoc" hypothesis, that is, an hypothesis that is formulated to explain away something without allowing itself to be tested by experiment.

J.N.D. (Dunedin).

Sir,—"Christian" is right with his "apostles of unreason." The merest child can see how unreasonable it is to imagine anything existing without a maker. In my Sunday school when we are told that God is the maker of everything, someone is bound to ask, "Who Made God?" To the answer that God has existed from all eternity someone is sure to ask why cannot other things, perhaps in different form, have also existed. So far I have not heard an answer based on reason.

PUZZLED (Gisborne).

Sir,—What is a Rationalist? A person with rationed brains? How do evolutionists explain the whale? It appears to be nearly a fish now, after having once been an animal. It still comes up to breathe and has thighs under its skin. Or is it an animal in the making?

The Bible is full of poetry and parable; yet truth underlies all. It lays down the order of Creation much as the Scientists do; darkness, mist, steam. Fishes first, and so on. Man is the "image of God," the Divine Spark (Soul) which, at a moment, came to us; and whether

our bodies were created suddenly, or evolved slowly, surely does not matter much.

D.S. (Leigh).

Sir,—I question the accuracy of Mr. Hulbert's quotation attributing to the preacher whom he criticises the statement that any atheistic theory is an invention of the devil. Then, whether the preacher said "the atheistic theory of evolution" or "the theory of atheistic evolution" seems to me to make little difference, because it was clear from the context that the preacher was not condemning every theory of evolution, but only the atheistic theory. Mr. Hulbert (who has evidently not read the last paragraph of *The Origin of Species*) thinks that every theory of evolution must be atheistic, for he writes: "Science deals only with facts, and biology, geology and zoology, being factual sciences are inherently atheistic." Only

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a person ignorant of the distinction between science and philosophy could make such a statement. Science is neither theistic nor atheistic, for it does not concern itself with the question of God's existence. It is the business of science to discuss less fundamental problems, such as the structure of the atom, the structure and functioning of living bodies, etc. Whether God exists or not is a question for philosophy, and many great philosophers, e.g., Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, S. Augustine, S. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes and Leibnitz, have answered it in the affirmative. Aristotle, I may add, was also a great biologist, the moderns, according to Darwin, being mere boys alongside him.

Since biology is a science, it has nothing to do with any Biblical creed or dogma, and if anyone has been guilty of mixing the two, it is Mr. Hulbert, who has asserted an incompatibility between them. Next, little children are not "taught parrot-fashion religious exercises and catechism long before they are capable of reasoning." If Mr. Hulbert had had any experience of teaching children, he would have learnt that they are capable of reasoning very early. They are not taught the catechism "parrot-fashion," but in a manner accommodated to their understanding. And even though a child of six or seven may not be sophisticated enough to be satisfied with the shallow dogmas of "Rationalism," he can at that age understand something of God and of the many mysteries that point to His existence.

Whether or not it is opportune to have religious topics debated over the air is for those in charge of broadcasting to decide. Religion would have nothing to fear from such debates, for her opponents have found very little new to say since Celsus was refuted by Origen in the second century.

G.H.D. (Greenmeadows).

(Mr. Hulbert, who started this controversy, may reply briefly to close it.—Ed.)

### CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS.

Sir,—It seems hardly possible to me that many people could enjoy the "Contemporary Composers" whose music has taken up so much time on the air lately.

It is only the desire to be up-to-date, I am sure, that could induce anyone to listen with patience to the aimless jumble and chaos of warring instruments that was given us this afternoon from 2YC (November 9). Real genius may be more or less independent of the age it lives in, but modern composers have been brought up in a period of mental confusion and unrest, and those of moderate ability have been dominated by those conditions. May one beg that they should not be given more than just a fair hearing?

"CONVALESCENT" (Eastbourne).

### RUDYARD KIPLING

Sir,—There is much that is admirable in "Vincent County's" letter on "Thanks-giving for Victory." But it is a pity that in his third paragraph he seems to be one of those who, without troubling to read, much less understand, Kipling, think it fashionable, "a sort of hall-mark of intelligence," to decry him.

First he is guilty of a most uncouth misquotation. The second line of the verse he quotes should read, "And Mirth that has no bitter springs," not strings. Secondly his use of the word "doggerel" is inaccurate. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as "trivial, mean, halting or irregular verse." The ideals set before the children in the song are certainly not trivial or mean, as V.C. himself grudgingly admits; and the last thing that can be said of Kipling's verse is that it is halting or irregular. I would refer V.C. particularly to the fifth and sixth verses of the Children's Song; and I would ask if he knows any place in literature where the same thoughts are better expressed.

Lastly V.C.'s remark "The sentiments are worthy of course" is the acme of impertinence. How condescending of him! Let who will quarrel with the song's noble aspirations. So much the worse for him. It may be after all that such things as Kipling here wrote about are hidden from the wise and prudent, but have been revealed unto babes.

If V.C. poses as a critic, he should not be loose and slovenly in the use of words, especially when he has the audacity to arraign an author whose mastery of the English language is admitted even by his most hostile critics.

R. B. SIBSON (Auckland).

### MUSIC IN SCHOOLS

Sir,—May I express appreciation of the splendid work being done in connection with music in schools. We have heard with pleasure the primary schools choral festivals, a few secondary school choirs, and now the Dunedin Technical College Symphony Orchestra. I believe these performances of our youth are of too great an importance to be interrupted by even the news session. Let us have the full programmes and let us have them from the Main Stations.

J. A. D. THOMPSON (Timaru).

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Fair Deal" (Auckland): Matter will be investigated and, if a breach has occurred, steps will be taken to prevent a recurrence.

E.C.D. (Campbell's Bay): Appreciation of session reported to those responsible.

Disappointed Listener (Nelson): As anxious as you are that our programmes should be accurate. So are all the Stations. Steps are being taken to try to overcome these difficulties. Meanwhile our thanks for your interest.

To several correspondents: We have no more space available for the discussion on British and American films.