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1946

WE said a fortnight ago that Christmas 1945 could be civilisation's last but might be the most memorable since the first. Since we wrote that sentence the Moscow Conference of foreign ministers has met and it is almost if not quite in the power of the men assembled there to say which half of our Christmas comment will prove true. Whatever happens, many people will have entered 1946 in fear and trembling—fear not so much of the atomic bomb as of the failure of the united nations to overcome mutual suspicions. The bomb in itself is only potentially alarming; but it is alarming that there is enough scientific genius in the world to split atoms and not enough political genius to unite three cities. It is of course no new thing that knowledge should have outpaced wisdom, but it is a new thing that the power of knowledge should suddenly have become great enough, with a little assistance from folly, to destroy civilisation in a month or two. No such situation as that has ever faced mankind before, and we are dangerously complacent or dangerously dull and stupid if we are entering 1946 in the belief that the perils of the last six years have all been safely surmounted. Some of them certainly have been; and we are entitled to feel safe on one point—the destruction of the two powers that set out deliberately to destroy us. Without that victory there could have been no other for generations for the nations to whom the control of the world has now fallen, and we do well to rejoice in it. But we know that even that victory was a race against time; that our enemies might have mastered the atom before we did; and that to secure our victory we must achieve international confidence and understanding faster than they have ever been achieved before. Unless 1946 brings that second victory nearer it would be better if time stood still.

**LETTERS FROM LISTENERS****SANTA CLAUS ON SECOND THOUGHTS**

Sir,—On second thoughts what might be termed the Atomic outlook does seem ominous enough to justify Major-General Brock Chisholm's desire to do away with "Santa Claus and all that." If this is done the logic of abolishing childhood will be seen to be irresistible and, this being so, the next essential measure will be to abolish children. Thus ultimately we shall approach the painful necessity of abolishing ourselves. These reflections are disagreeable. It took the Victorians a century to realise that they were living in the Age of Steam. Fortunately they got it. We shall not be given a decade at most to wake up to the fact that we are in the Atomic Age. Are we going to awake to it?

—F. L. COMBS (Wellington).

**MISPRONUNCIATION**

Sir,—*"Listener"* (Thames) attaches some blame to schools for failure to teach simple English. There seems to be justification for his remarks. For instance, in local schools, both primary and grammar, the past participle of be is pronounced BIN. To my Dublin ear this is hideous. Another small word "again," is pronounced as if it were a profit. My dictionary (Chambers 20th Century) gives no alternative to "agen."

Anyway what does it matter? Why should not Noo Zillun have an accent (pronounced ack-sent, both syllables equally and laboriously stressed) of its own if it chooses? We Homies do not have to say bin or Fal-mouth, and En-zedders to their credit are perfectly polite and tolerant concerning our—to them—clipped accents.

On several occasions I have heard an Auckland announcer give a strange twist to *Cavalleria Rusticana*. It sounded like *Cavalerera Rusticana*, reminiscent of Sam Weller's "properiator."

R. S. JARDIN (Takapuna).

**"SALOME"**

Sir,—G.M.'s criticism of *Salome*, *Where She Danced*, is best summed up in his own words: "What is my opinion against Universal's?" As two who have seen this very enjoyable film, we cannot understand G.M.'s distorted and misconceived remarks. He has made this picture a farce. Perhaps it required a little intelligence to follow the theme of this picture. Evidently G.M. was lacking in that respect, and attempted (very poorly) to give his opinion of the film in a biased and sarcastic manner.

Why must G.M. continue in this "hatred of Hollywood?" Not only in this instance, but in practically every picture he has "reviewed," no matter how good, he finds some fault with it if it is American. Also we have noticed that no matter how bad an English picture may be he can find some excuse for lauding it.

In our opinion G.M.'s reviews of all American films, and especially the one mentioned, show that he is a bigoted and unjust critic.—"ABUSE IS NO CRITICISM" (Wellington).

(Of course it isn't. It is much better to be polite and call your opponent unjust, bigoted, and lacking in brains.—Ed.)

**"MESSIAH"**

Sir,—Shakespeare's scornful remarks about "the man that hath not music in himself" might have been written for

whoever was responsible for the poor broadcasting from 2YC of the glorious music of the *Messiah* while 2YA was devoted to such items as "Itma—Tommy Handley's Variety" and "Variety Magazine—music, mystery and comedy." The music was good at times, but maddening on the whole. A similar infliction was suffered by listeners last Christmas from Christchurch when the secondary station was used for Handel's music while the primary one was dealing out third-class items.

"PROTESTER" (Nelson).

**THE CHRISTIAN WAY**

Sir,—Why do you not begin your programme list on Sunday, in the Christian manner? TUM-TUM (Hawera).

(Christian is as Christian does. If we begin with Sunday, readers in remote districts miss a day.—Ed.)

**BEETHOVEN UP TO DATE**

Sir,—I notice some of your correspondents disapprove of your experiments on Beethoven's music. To-night in *The Listener* I found 20 minutes allocated to the Kreutzer Sonata for violin which, when played, takes at least 30 minutes. I naturally assumed that more experiments would be tried. Being fond of experiments I followed the sonata with my music, eagerly awaiting the inevitable.

Alas, I was disappointed. You took 10 minutes off the next programme and played the sonata in exactly the same old-fashioned way in which it has been played for 141 years.

H.P.R. (Lower Hutt).

**RADIO PROGRAMMES**

Sir,—Having returned to New Zealand after being six years away at the war, I cannot get over the appalling inferiority of our daily programmes. After what I have heard in America, Canada, and Britain, our own radio fare seems stuffy, weak, and lifeless. At first I couldn't exactly put a finger on the reason why. But finding that I can hear the BBC Shortwave programme here very clearly, and comparing them with our own radio programmes, there is no doubt in my opinion that the NBS hasn't got the art of presentation.

When I first heard the New Zealand stations again I was struck by the dreadfully out-of-date records and performers that I thought would have been put on the retired list long ago. When I reached England I discovered a new world of marvellous music I never heard in New Zealand, and don't hear yet, and maybe never will. Of course the NBS have difficulties. Worthwhile radio talent is not in big supply in our country, and no doubt the war seriously cut off the flow of new records from overseas to keep our "glorified gramophone" going. But with the material the NBS do have at their disposal, they don't make up a good daily service. Everything is bits and pieces and one long dreary medley. Once in a while one can get "one's teeth" into something, but not often. As I see it, its first step is to get some organisation, new life and interest into the programmes and the way they are put over. Radio coverage in New Zealand seems to be good. The announcers want to pep up a bit and not seem so dry and disinterested. They should be trained more thoroughly and carefully before they are

allowed to speak over the air. I say this because the sort of thing we hear is that which I heard two nights ago, when a harsh-voiced lad on an auxiliary station in a certain centre announced he was going to play some music by "Biz-ett."

CHALLENGE (Dunedin).

Sir,—Might I suggest to the Broadcasting Service that its New Year Resolution be to make the programmes brighter and more interesting. It could well start by improving the approach to the 9 p.m. Newsreel, which is in effect the Voice of New Zealand. At present this session is heralded by a tuneless dirge, followed by the sobering effect of "Big Ben," capped by, in most instances, a depressing voice telling us that we are to have more rain to-morrow. By this time one has collapsed to the bottom of one's chair resigned to hear the worst.

W. I. BROWN (Westport).

**SERIALS**

Sir,—I do not know why some people have to keep picking at radio serials. Is it that they cannot get more than one station on their sets, or is it just bad temper? I have listened to serials for a long time and there are some good and some just a little trying at times, but I have always been able to shift the dial to something more in my line.

INTERESTED (Runanga).

**CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS.**

Sir,—May I express appreciation for the programmes of contemporary music broadcast lately. In a country where we have no professional orchestra we are dependent on the radio for all our modern orchestral music. Works that would not be heard here for years to come have fortunately reached us in recorded form. And yet your correspondent "Convalescent" would deprive us of the still small proportion of modern music that we hear on the grounds that it is aimless jumble. Does he (or she) expect modern composers to write in the style of Wagner or Debussy? "Convalescent" attributes the apparently aimless dissonance of contemporary music to the unrest and confusion of modern life, but Sibelius, Szymanowski, and Bartok have lived and worked in almost idyllic surroundings, yet their style can be as harsh as the most radical modernists. Composers express themselves more than the period in which they live.

So let us have more music by modern composers who are now just starting to get a fair hearing over the air. The indifferent attitude to contemporary music here must be changed.

L. PRUDEN (New Plymouth).

**"RADAR"**

Sir,—I would like to congratulate 1YA on the very fine programme "Radar" given from that station on Monday, November 26, at 7.30 p.m. I know that I, and I feel sure many other listeners, found "Radar" both interesting and entertaining and presented in a very pleasing fashion. Another programme about "Phoenix and Wales" presented some time back also proved a most enjoyable programme.

—JEREMY (Matamata).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT  
"Satisfied Customer" (Hastings): Most kind of you, but we would blush.