

LISTENER

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Mr. Attlee's Visit

MR. ATTLEE'S decision to visit New Zealand is in itself very good news. It would be good news in any Dominion, but nowhere quite so good as in the remotest from London and the most isolated. We need these contacts. Although we can now talk to London, at a price, listen to London, at almost no price at all, and travel to London in about the same time as we used to spend on a journey to Sydney or Melbourne, there is no effective substitute for face-to-face conversation. It is permissible to say, also, that the benefit of such a visit will not be on our side only. As long as there is a commonwealth of British nations it will be important that each unit should understand every other unit, big or small. When world brotherhood comes, misunderstandings will be merely political dyspepsias or colds in the head; unpleasant still but no longer serious. To-day all misunderstandings are serious, and the most serious are the domestic ones. For internationalism is of course not in sight. The human family is divided into three or four powerful groups, not warring groups certainly, or even hostile, but suspicious, jealous, confused, and capable of almost any plunge into sudden anger and folly. So far as our own group is concerned, we are fortunately very near to complete confidence and co-operation. World brotherhood is still a dream, but British brotherhood is a reality, and to keep it real we must be careful not to drift apart. Mr. Attlee is coming to help in keeping us close; not just to look at us or let us look at him, but to greet the people of New Zealand as well as their Government and carry home the news that the cables can't convey.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THE "DARK" AGES?

Sir,—I feel I must spring to the side of Mr. Tyndall in his lone stand against obscurantism.

All his critics have harped on the few great names in the world of culture in the Middle Ages. If they went deeper into their references they would find that even these few produced only works approved — usually ordered — by the Church; and for a very good reason. Had their works ever so subtly questioned the Church's teachings they would have made uncomfortable acquaintance with torture or death.

So though culture within strict limits was allowed—even ordered—woe betide anyone who went beyond those limits. Oh, yes, Art and Education were encouraged in the Dark Ages—provided only that one could learn, parrot-like, without thinking, accept without question, create without true originality.

I may be excused for feeling rather strongly about this. I am one of those who think, who question, who like to be honest about their beliefs, and I would undoubtedly have been tortured and put to death in some unpleasant way by the "Free Educationalists" of the Dark Ages.

I ask Mr. Tyndall's critics to put themselves in my place (if their imaginations will run to it), contemplate the horrors of Middle Ages "free thought"—and think again. —TWENTIETH CENTURY HERETIC (Auckland).

(Subject to Mr. Tyndall's right of reply, this correspondence is closed.—Ed.)

Sir,—I write supporting your beleaguered correspondent Mr. Tyndall, in his assertion of a medieval blackout. Although I feel that Mr. Tyndall was perhaps too sweeping in his total destruction of the medieval wood, I think his critics have been so concerned with the loss of particular trees as to overlook the poor sort of wood their trees made anyway. With the exception of those particular varieties well and truly identified in your columns recently, I agree in general with Mr. Tyndall's statement about the sparsity of the medieval intellectual and cultural flora.

What seems to be lost sight of in this controversy is the broad prospect of the whole of human history. Up to the time of the later Greeks, man was making steady progress along the line of evolutionary development and adaptation. About the 5th Century B.C., however, the Greek philosophers in their ivory-towered Academy became aware of man's mental ability and demonstrated its function. This was of first importance in that it drew attention to the most useful aid man has in the living-adapting process. But the Greeks were so impressed by their discovery that they applied their first creation of its disciplined exploitation, the significant concept of value, to mind and its products. They made ideas about the world and human society objective, absolute, and universal in space and time. The day-to-day experiences of physical sensation and practical thinking were considered of only transient value, and on a banal and unimportant level at that. Euclid conscientiously kept his geometry "pure" and wholly intellectual. Archimedes, an outstanding applied scientist, refused to record any but his theoretical discoveries. Their application to everyday

living was considered unworthy of mental activity, the provision of material for which was taken as the only value of knowledge. Thus was created a dualism between intellect and the dynamic factors in man's make-up. Christianity perpetuated this attitude by accepting the tyranny of objective and abiding values and canalising the dynamic factors into adoration and charity.

Western civilisation squirmed in this intellectual Procrustean bed for centuries. Finally such men as Roger Bacon, Galileo, Copernicus, da Vinci and Columbus dared to break with tradition and applied mental activity to the data they gathered from observing and feeling as human beings living in a real world instead of the world inherited from that classical knowledge and opinion which

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 20 and 21

all through the Middle Ages had been the staple of the Schoolmen's barren intellectualism. This fusion of intellect and instinctive interest in the immediate world gave rise to a zest for achievement and a vitality in the quest for information and experiment. Man began to be himself again, a living being that thinks, in place of the duality of living and thinking he was in the Middle Ages.

Under the impact of dynamic thinking, social, economic and cultural values suffered basic charges — the very mechanics of adaptation. Whether we have in fact become more adapted is yet to be seen; recent history would suggest we have not. But we do see life and change in our science, education, and thought, qualities essential to the adaptation of the species, but unknown during the Middle Ages. Even the lush flowering of our art is alive and fluxional, even though perhaps not as perfect as the rare orchids of the medieval night.

GURTH W. HIGGIN (Karori).

THE MAUNGANUI, PRESENT, PAST AND FUTURE.

Sir,—I notice with approval that the three or four hundred men of the Victory Parade party on the Maunganui were to have the services of three Y.M.C.A. secretaries, a chaplain, and a representative of A.E.W.S. I cannot help thinking of one winter's day, late in 1919, when the same boat left Liverpool carrying some 1300 returning troops; and I, with the exalted rank of temporary sergeant, was in charge of and sole tutor for educational activities, filled the post of Y.M.C.A. secretary, and also acted as chaplain throughout the voyage, there being no other. Incidentally in health I was C3; but we managed quite a lot in one way or another, with voluntary assistance.

We have certainly advanced since then in our ideas of welfare, presumably through our Labour Government. So I am encouraged to look ahead and see another advance. In all seriousness I propose that on her next voyage after the return from the Victory Parade, the Maunganui be set aside as a travelling university, be filled with a lot of the

wonderful young 18 year olds graduating from high school—of both sexes of course—whom the University colleges cannot take; and that she be sent around the world, with an adequate tutorial staff and library. Surely if we can find the money for the Victory Parade, with a big daily bill for pay, we can also find it for a travelling university, costing much less, as the students would not be on pay, but merely need pocket-money, nor would they need elaborate equipment. And the boat will be there all ready for the job. The Swedes, I notice, have recently sent a similar ship to England: why should not New Zealand follow suit, if she cannot this time lead the world? I commend this scheme to the Minister of Education and gladly offer my services.

JOHN JOHNSON (Lower Hutt).

TOO MANY AT ONCE?

Sir,—I find it puzzling to understand the arrangement of the programmes at certain times. Why, for instance, do we get four famous New Zealanders all coming on at the same time, 7 p.m. from different ZB stations? It is impossible to listen in to all as one would like. The same situation arises at 11 a.m. from the YA stations. I particularly wished to listen in to "Cycling through England" from 2YA at 11 a.m. on April 9, and at the same time did not want to miss "Outstanding Women" from 3YA put on also at 11 a.m. on April 9.

Also, couldn't we have some one act plays by local talent instead of so much discordant jazz. It would improve the speaking voices of our younger generation too. It was a pleasure to listen to Lady Louis Mountbatten giving her address at the Town Hall, Wellington — every word coming over distinctly and well.

DOROTHY TENNANT (Tai Tapu).

(If our correspondent listens regularly to one ZB station and one YA station, she will, in time, hear all the "famous New Zealanders" and "Outstanding Women." These recorded features are heard in rotation from all main National or Commercial stations.—Ed.)

"EASTER."

Sir,—The misuse of the word "Easter" that you made in your issue of April 18 when you referred to "Easter Broadcasts" of the St. Matthew Passion on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday is a common mistake among ignorant people; but surely we ought to expect something better of *The Listener*.

How can Passion Music on Good Friday be an "Easter" broadcast? Reference to the definitions of the words "Passion" and "Easter" in the Oxford dictionary will show you that this is a matter of good English, and not just the fad of a priest.

R. P. TAYLOR (Kaiapoi).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J.M. (Marton): There are two, which are alternated occasionally: a part of Fauré's "Pelleas and Melisande," and a part of a Sinfonia by J. C. Bach.

"D.X." (Christchurch): It will be some months yet before the work is completed. When it is, we shall publish the details.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTOR.

Will the author of "His English Was Basic" please send us name and address?

CORRECTION

By an error Bernie McConnell, sports announcer for 42B, was described in our issue of April 18 as the sports announcer of 4Y2.