

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD.

Every Friday

Price Threepence

MAY 24, 1946

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## Shaping Things To Come

A CORRESPONDENT who writes to us to-day charges us with shaping things to come by laughing at present things; or encouraging others to laugh at them; or at least presenting them as possible subjects for laughter. Of course we are guilty. We do wish to shape things to come by changing present things and, if laughter helps to change them, we shall go on encouraging laughter. In that respect we agree with the preacher who said some years ago in a Presbyterian pulpit that if prohibitionists were half as funny as drunk men the battle for prohibition would be easy. The battle against poverty would be easy too if the rich everywhere could be made ridiculous. The trouble is that the rich are not all ridiculous: they are often brave and wise and tolerant and generous, and in those cases laughter alone would not help Lazarus. It might even injure him, and cartoonists usually come to his aid with tears. That has been done in the cartoon of which our contributor complains. It is done every day all over the world, and offends only when it fails. But it is not a failure or an offence because it misses its mark now and again. We are all solemn sometimes, and some of us are so solemn all the time that the cartoonist can't prevail against us. It is difficult to make a Catholic see a joke against the Pope or induce a Royalist to laugh at a King; though successes in both fields have been recorded. It is even possible that Communists have laughed at Stalin and Nazis at Hitler, but if it has happened no one has heard about it. Cartoonists usually sow their seeds in soil in which there is a chance at least of a strike, but some necessarily falls on the footpath.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### "DEGENERATE" CARTOONS

Sir,—Your first *New Yorker* cartoons were degenerate. Poisoning and poverty are not humorous. Sadism in the Weimar Republic was sinister; and the U.S.A. contains menacing fascist forces. The shape of things to come is formed, to however small a degree, by what we laugh at to-day.

### HUMANITARIAN (Auckland).

(We refer to this letter in our leading article.—Ed.)

### WELLINGTON CATHEDRAL

Sir,—I was sorry to see *The Listener* devoting its cover space to the proposed Cathedral for Wellington. Among those New Zealand Christians who served in Italy there must be many who would share with me a profound sorrow that we are to see repeated in Wellington that which so often while we were abroad seemed to us a tragic error.

Every Italian village had its magnificent church. Many, many times we visited these vast empty halls of marble and of stone which shouldered aside the miserable dwellings of a people with whom starvation was a frequent lodger. Poems in stone? Yes, perhaps they were. Wonderful buildings, fine examples of an exquisite harmony of art and craftsmanship. Yet a poem in stone may be a bitter comment upon a tragedy in flesh and blood. It seemed to me that in most such palaces of the temporal church each and every stone might well have been said to have been a tribute to the earthy vanity of ecclesiastical dignity, and an emblem of the cold, harsh emptiness of worldly things. The whole splendid structures seemed so far removed from the spiritual truths of Christianity that Christ had disappeared from sight and all that was left was the stone, the ornate chapels, and perhaps the superficial splendours of occasional pageantry.

On architectural grounds alone the proposed Cathedral could be severely handled by a competent critic; however, I feel that the whole principle is wrong. The "Temple of the Living God" cannot be created in stone. He is at home in the fields and in the forests, but most of all in the hearts of men. Rather than erect a monument to temporal vanity and misdirected idealism the worthy citizens of Wellington could perform a far finer service to New Zealand and to the Christian cause if they placed their Cathedral funds at the disposal of the City Missioner for the erection and maintenance of a youth hostel, or for the establishment of a permanent health camp. Let the Cathedral builders build instead a modern home for wayward youth replacing the crime colleges that we know as Borstals, and they will indeed be building a cathedral, not so much in stone as in the hearts and lives of the people. Put souls before mortar, and lives before stone.

—8676 (Wellington).

### "ON KEEPING AN ANTHOLOGY"

Sir,—After reading N. P. Webber's interesting article on "The Fun of Keeping an Anthology" may I suggest to anyone desirous of starting one, that writers whose works are so rich in lovely words and phrasing, and well worth reading for that reason as well as for their content, are the Chestertons (Cecil as well as G.K.); Hilaire Belloc, whose "Path to Rome" is a masterpiece of prose, the

little sketches adorning its pages pure delights; and the greatest of all perhaps Francis Thompson. Unfortunately Francis Thompson needs to be grown into, one way being through the medium of Everard Meynell's *Life of Francis Thompson*, which is an anthology in itself; but once started on, Francis Thompson's works give the utmost satisfaction, his humour so lighthearted and his amazing vocabulary almost unbelievable. His serious works need no adjectives of mine.

P.M.B. (Wellington).

### "VOICE OF THE ANDES"

Sir,—With reference to an item from a correspondent in *The Listener* may I point out that the above station transmits not only on Sundays, but on six days a week on two wavelengths—24 and 30 metres. This is according to the station's own announcement, which I often hear on the 24 band, though I have not yet been able to place him on the 30. The station is on the air prior to 2.0 p.m. (our time), but in Portuguese, I believe; then takes up in English from 2.0 to 4.0 p.m. TAIHOA (Lower Hutt)

### GILBERT AND SULLIVAN OPERAS

Sir,—After listening with growing impatience over the last few weeks to the NBS presentation of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, I found a recent fiasco just too much. Act 1 of *Ruddigore* was airily dismissed in ten minutes and then we were abruptly bumped into Act 2 of *The Mikado* on which some 20 minutes were spent. To hear these charming operas spoiled by thoughtless presentation is infuriating to the G. and S. enthusiast, and quite confusing to any listener not knowing them well. Why cannot we have one opera in its entirety for an evening's entertainment?

### DISGUSTED (Howick).

(The official reply to this complaint is that the agreement with the holders of the Gilbert and Sullivan copyright stipulates that no more than a specified period shall be broadcast on all NBS stations in any one week. It is not always possible therefore to fit into this time the complete recordings of some of the operas or to avoid using excerpts only on those occasions when the balance of time available is not sufficient for the broadcast of a full act.—Ed.)

### DUST-BIN ROMANCE

Sir,—I read with envy and some amazement the short story under the above heading in a recent *Listener*. Where in New Zealand is the garbage man who "comes around the yard with the bin on his shoulder." Is there really anywhere in New Zealand where that happens? Lead me to it, because alas! my dust-bin will never bring romance to my back door nor will my dust-man (you see—where I live he's not a garbage man and somehow dust-man seems—well—more polite) never gives himself the chance of seeing how charming I look as I sweep my back doorstep. Ah! No! for every Thursday night I must remember to shoulder my own dust-bin to my front gate and plant it firmly outside the gate. I am certain my dust-man would never see the sunrise tints in a mud puddle or the dewy beads in a spider's web, as Emmie's did. Why, he doesn't even see my bin if it's just inside the gate (and it's a fairly big tin,

too). And another thing—although I'm sure my bin is just as neat and dainty as Emmie's was, I'm certain he never feels it is a pleasure to empty it for me. No, he just bangs it over the side of the cart (I hear him every Friday morning as I am having breakfast) and then he just throws it in the gutter along with the lid and there they have to stay until I sneak out later and retrieve them. I am not naturally shy and nervous and I have not nurtured an ungrateful parent for 20 years, but I do draw the line at vamping my dust-man, breathlessly or otherwise, outside my front gate, and so I'm afraid he will never know how much I long for him to come to my back door and I—well—I will think of Emmie every Thursday night as I shoulder my own garbage around to the gate—think of her wistfully.—JUST A-WEARYING FOR HIM (Christchurch).

(We hate having to tell our correspondent that our short story was sent from Australia.—Ed.)

### "WATERLOO ROAD"

Sir,—I don't know how well "Lambeth Walk" knows London or whether he has spent nights on Waterloo Station with a respirator for a pillow, as I have.

I love Waterloo Station in the odd way one does love such noisy, dirty, crowded, human places. The local colour in the film *Waterloo Road*, even the little gestures and idiosyncracies that only a Londoner would recognise as a true and unalienable part of the whole, were so perfect that I had to shake myself to get back to New Zealand (unwillingly) when the lights went up. Or perhaps "Lambeth Walk's" point of controversy was the phrase "really important people." I would suggest that he see another film—*True Glory*—and hear what General Eisenhower has to say of the men from the Waterloo Roads of this world—the "really important people." NOSTALGIA (Auckland).

### CHURCH MUSIC

Sir,—Like "Church Music Lover" (Auckland) I am also a regular listener to the session "In Quires and Places Where They Sing," and heard the broadcast from Wesley Church, Wellington, of part of Martin Shaw's "The Redeemer." I agree heartily with the sentiments expressed by your correspondent when he stated that in his opinion, local church choirs should have more opportunity of singing in the above session, and in the atmosphere of their own church.

I am at present on holiday in Thames, and it was my good fortune on Anzac night to attend in the Parish church (Anglican) a rendering in complete form of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise." I am satisfied from what I heard that tucked away in this small town is one of the best Parish church choirs in the Dominion.

Is it too much to suggest that the possibility of extending broadcast facilities to this and other similar places of proven musical worth outside the cities should be fully explored in the near future?—ANOTHER CHURCH MUSIC LOVER (Auckland).

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Blyth Carey (Auckland): See final paragraph on page 9, this issue.

E. M. Turner (Auckland): An arrangement of melodies by J. Strauss. This recording is not available in New Zealand.