

MARCH 14, 1947

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## First Test

IT would be foolish to pretend that everybody was satisfied with the symphony orchestra's first concert. If that had happened it would have been as bad for the orchestra itself as for those who listened to it. It would have meant that we really are as complacent in New Zealand as it has become the fashion to say that we are. But in music at any rate we are not complacent. We are often unreasonably critical. The perfectionists made it very difficult for the orchestra to get established, and the soured and superior ones have not made it easy for the players to test public opinion. It has no doubt been good for the orchestra all in all that it has had to do its first months of training to the accompaniment of a good deal of whispering and head-shaking, but there is a point beyond which that should not go. That point was reached at the first concert, which certainly proved that while there is still a long and difficult road ahead of the orchestra, it is equipped for the journey. It is still permissible, and still necessary, to criticise, but it is not permissible any longer to be negatively critical and coldly resistant. The new page has been turned and the new chapter started, and that is as much as anyone should ask for a year or two. An orchestra is not a machine. It is a living organism and must be given time to grow. But opinion must be given time to grow too. Perfection in performance will come long before we can expect judgment and good taste in listening. It has after all taken us a century to establish this orchestra—not a bad performance in the circumstances, but a warning against impatience. It will probably be thought in another hundred years that it was a very bold step to start anything so ambitious in 1946; as we now wonder at the boldness of the pioneers in the field of public works.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MARCH 14

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## MUNGO PARK

Sir,—May I correct a small error in Barbara Matthews's interesting sketch of Ruth Park? Mungo Park, of whom, we learn, Ruth Park is a descendant, was not an explorer of the Nile, but of the Niger. Park made two voyages to Africa, first in 1795, when after severe hardships, he discovered that the Niger flowed from west to east, as Herodotus thought, and then in 1805. On this second visit he reached Bamako on the banks of the Niger, but shortly after was killed by the natives.

JAMES O. HANLON  
(Auckland).

## MARK HAMBURG

Sir,—On the evening of Sunday, February 16, I was listening to an item from Station 2YD dealing with Mark Hambourg, the eminent pianist. The commentator, in the course of his remarks, stated that Hambourg had visited New Zealand twice, his first visit being in 1903, his second in 1931.

May I offer a correction? During the year 1908 I attended recitals given by Mark Hambourg in Christchurch, so actually he paid three visits to this country, the second taking place in the year I have just mentioned. If memory serves me correctly, I was only a small boy at the time. Hambourg's 1908 tour was under the direction of Messrs. J. & N. Tait.

C.B. (Carterton).

## THOMAS BRACKEN

Sir,—I have been asked to edit a selection of the writings of Thomas Bracken and to supply a biographical introduction. I should therefore be grateful if you would let me appeal to any of your readers who may have letters or other papers that would help in my researches.

The Librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Bowen Street, Wellington, has consented to receive material on my behalf. It will be returned after I have consulted it. Information and assistance will be gratefully acknowledged. For those who may care to write to me personally my address is: 4 Newcombe Street, Naenae, Lower Hutt.

ROBERT SOLWAY.

## "THE ROCKING HORSE"

Sir,—I have heard some silly things from my radio, but a BBC play under the above heading which I recently heard from 3YA is surely a masterpiece of silliness and prompts me to burst into print. Here is the plot in a few words. A child, whose parents live far beyond their means, hears voices whispering about the house, "Money, money, we must have more money." This gets on the child's nerves and he asks his mother why they are not rich and is told that it is because father is not "lucky." To mother's amusement the child says he is lucky because God has told him so. Thereafter whenever he rides his rocking horse the name of a horse in a forthcoming race meeting comes to him "straight from heaven." With the help of the old butler he backs these heaven-revealed tips and in no time is able to pay £5,000 into mother's banking account—it being arranged that she be told it is a legacy from a forgotten relative. Mother indulges in an orgy of spending and the family is soon on the rocks again. No tip comes from Above for a long period—child grows thin and pale and goes about muttering "I must know

the winner of the Derby, I must, I must," etc. The night before the Derby he is heard riding his rocking horse furiously and suddenly he shouts "Malabar, Malabar," and falls off his horse in a fit. He is on his death bed when the old butler rushes in and says "We are saved, Master Paul—I backed Malabar and he won." Paul dies in his mother's arms, but Mum's banking account goes up £70,000. (And I haven't made a mistake in the noughts.)

Does the BBC really think so little of the intelligence of its listeners as to imagine that any one of them could be entertained by such crass nonsense, not to mention blasphemy?

H. THOMPSON (Christchurch).

## WALKING TOURS

Sir,—“Sundowner” has said some kind and probably undeserved things about my recent travel books, and I feel under some obligation, with your permission, to thank him for the friendly manner in which he has pointed out a serious mis-statement of fact. I had strangely stated that the books had been written with the hope of inducing those able to

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 18 and 19

do so to travel imaginatively. Actually that expressed hope appears to have been realised. “Sundowner,” however, knows that my purpose was very different. Referring to me he says, “he really sat down to write” for “readers who share his ‘Early Heaven and happy views.’” “Sundowner,” in fact, is a super-magician; so far surpassing those who merely draw rabbits out of hats, he has drawn from my head ideas and purposes that I felt sure were never there. Not content with that, by the use of the word “his” in the quotation—whatever it may mean—he appears to do me the unmerited honour of fathering upon me words that I have no recollection of having even seen before. It would be interesting to know what “Sundowner” really meant when he sat down to let his readers into the secret of what I really meant to write.

A. H. REED (Dunedin).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Interested (Wellington): We have no information.

Frederick H. Taylor (Auckland): We did not print the original statement; we cannot therefore print criticism of it.

Young Musician (Morrinsville): No date has yet been fixed for presentation of these recordings.

D. Davies (Karori): A special commemorative programme for St. David's Day was broadcast by 2YA on March 1, as scheduled in our programmes.

H. Alexander (Wellington): The programme was not “discontinued” by 1YA; this particular series of broadcasts has simply come to an end—as all good things must—at that station. But it is still running at other stations.

Open Slather (Wellington): Letter has already appeared in another paper.

Too Much BBC (Tauranga): Frequent rebroadcasts of news services during the war years enabled listeners to keep in touch with quickly-moving events in all theatres of the war. However, since the cessation of hostilities the number of rebroadcasts have been reduced considerably, and included in the reduction, after careful investigation and consideration, were the news and commentaries from the U.S.A., which were broadcast over the seven main National stations at 7.45 p.m. each night except Sundays. Those listeners who are interested in news and commentaries from the U.S.A. can, by tuning into the powerful shortwave transmitters operated from that country, still receive these broadcasts.