

OCTOBER 24, 1947

Summer Shows Again

IT is pleasant to be reminded by the opening of the Show season that summer is again here (or near). But the situation is even better than that. Royal Shows are here again after the long interruption of the war, and to farmers at least it hardly matters any more whether peace has been officially proclaimed or not. Agricultural peace was proclaimed this week at Hastings, where Tomoana Park, if it did not show tanks turning into tractors, showed men and beasts assembled in thousands for purely peaceful purposes. It is of course true that Shows breed rivalry and may bring strife. We could say things about Show points in this article that would bring us heated letters; and the truer they were the hotter the letters would be. We could say, for example, that the thickness of a cow's tail has nothing to do with the productiveness of its udder; that the light in a rooster's eye will not tell you much about his genes; that breeding horses with hairy legs is as meaningless as breeding dogs with elongated ears; and that the sooner farmers learn which end of a pig is the most profitable the sooner pig-breeding in New Zealand will take the right turning. There is almost no limit to the things we could say to provoke farmers if provocation were our purpose and to pick a quarrel with the breed societies if we thought it useful to trail our coats. But even if we told Canterbury that Corriedales are mongrels, unstable brutes who don't know after 50 years whether to grow mutton or wool, no blood would be shed. There can be as many arguments round a Show ring as in a meeting of modern mothers; but they all end in hot collars and a threat to produce something bigger or better. The wars of farmers are the wars of nature herself—the two blades of grass fighting for the food of the blade they have displaced, milk and meat competing for a sealed tin, and the watchful dog making off with the bone. Not one of them will ever reach an assembly of the United Nations.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WOMEN AND WAR

Sir,—You ask in your article "Women and War" if women are interested in such performances as *The Trojan Women* and if we listened until the end. Therefore, I want you to know that I at least am delighted to be able to listen again to Greek tragedies, which were a wonderful study in the time of Reinhardt in Berlin. I can't judge of course how it is for those who are not familiar with Greek plays, but for me the wonderful voices of the BBC productions gave even greater *plastik* to the characters than the stage performance, where often the concentration is scattered, or something disturbs you and brings you out of the emotional mood. In both plays I had forgotten my environment, being completely absorbed by the development of the play.

ELIZABET WELBRUCH
(Mahina Bay).

"MEN OF GOD"

Sir,—Six religious plays entitled *Men of God* are being presented over the air. They deal with Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist. One of the big objections to these religious plays is that they are presented as truth, and the lives of real men. Of the six heroes selected probably only Amos and Hosea are real persons. Elijah certainly never existed, but is simply an imaginary popular hero, and just as real as Jack the Giant Killer of our children's story fame. The wonderful doings and miracles credited to him are enough to condemn him, apart from other sources of proof. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist are at least doubtful persons. If John the Baptist was only a few months older than Jesus, how did he manage to escape the decree of King Herod, who killed all the children from two years old and under? More likely he was 32 years older than Jesus, and was a revolutionary before Jesus was born. When the New Testament account was written, the chief object was to appease the Romans, and so John the Baptist's character was changed accordingly.

"ARGOSY"
(Te Awamutu).

Sir,—I have listened with pleasurable thrills to the broadcast of the above on October 5. The chronology of 1 Kings was altered somewhat, but, no doubt, necessarily. I hope there will be a repetition later. I could not help feeling, however, that the compilers missed a great chance in passing Mendelssohn's music by in favour of specially written, modern-idiom music. His oratorio has been dramatised with (I understand) thrilling effect. The cacophonous incidental music to me seemed more anachronistic than would have Mendelssohn's, with its very marked Hebrew character.

F. K. TUCKER (Gisborne).

ORCHESTRA PROGRAMMES

Sir,—A. C. Mudford, of Kaitawa, certainly has the right stick, but has it by the wrong end. Variety of music is not achieved by making one orchestra play everything, but by having several orchestras each playing their own brand.

There are two types of musician. The one simply works for money; and will play all requests, often badly. The other is a "real" musician who plays because he would rather do that than anything else in the world,

and will always play well the music he likes. *However he will not play anything that he doesn't like* and will leave his orchestra rather than do so. I have never met any "in-between" type.

Let us, then, take it for granted that most of the players in the National Orchestra are of this second type, and are the "dinkum oil." In this case, if we wish to retain their services we must not ask them to play music other than of their own choosing. At the same time, I quite agree that aid should also be extended to exponents of other than the heavy classical. Why this class of music *alone* should be given a special orchestra and paid for with our money, although not sanctioned by our votes, is beyond me.

I hope that Mr. Mudford is no longer sore at our orchestra, but rather at the narrowness which says "this, and this only; you can like it or lump it!"

ANDREW D. V. CHRISTIE
(Wanganui).

"GON TO AYE"

Sir,—Reading that an old "friend" of my schooldays was to be recited in the School Broadcast, I "listened in." What a jolt I received, however, when the announcer, also the reciter, rendered

More letters from listeners will be found on page 19

the title of the poem as "How they brought the good news from Ghent (pronounced to rhyme with sent) to Aix" (as axe). Belgians would be puzzled to recognise their own towns, and I can imagine our Victorian Principal fainting with the shock had she heard anything but "good news from GON TO AYE" from her pupils.

EX DUDLEY HOUSE, Dorking
(Nth. Auckland).

YNCYCA

Sir,—As many of your readers seem interested in words, perhaps one of them could settle an argument I have had about the name of a bay in the Pelorus Sound. It is Yncyca and I was told that it is American Indian. I would like to know if that is correct.

E.M.H. (Havelock).

NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST CAPITAL

Sir,—The reference to Russell on Page 33 of *The Listener* of September 26 as the first capital of New Zealand is very wrong. Actually the first capital was known as Russell when the present town was called Kororareka. Briefly the story is this: Hobson arranged to buy about 300 acres at Okiato, opposite Opuia, with the intention of establishing his capital there. But the deal fell through. Later, when Auckland was decided on, the name Russell was shifted to Kororareka. We still hear Okiato referred to as Old Russell or Russelltown. The mistake I refer to is, of course, quite pardonable as many people even here in the Bay, and in Russell itself, do not know the true story. Any reader interested will find details in a booklet published by the Internal Affairs Department and written by Mrs. Ruth Ross.

It is interesting to know that the price agreed on for that sale was £15,000, of which £13,000 was for the buildings—£1000 was to be paid on possession, another £1000 five

months later, and the balance was to be on mortgage at 10 per cent. Who wouldn't like to be a Government mortgagee with interest at 10 per cent.
N. W. GILLING (Opuia).

HOBSON'S CHOICE

Sir,—Could someone not prevail on the broadcasting authorities to stagger features such as plays, grand opera, etc., so that the present clash would be avoided. On Sunday night I was inclined to improve my mind by listening to the story of Elijah's conflict with idolaters, but my wife (bless her) wanted a comedy, "Hobson's Choice" from a different station at the same time. She had Hobson's Choice and so did I.

JUBAL'S LIAR (Te Kuiti).

STUDIO RECITALS

Sir,—Under the caption "Radio Viewsreel—What Our Commentators Say," on Page 9 I cull the following excerpts: "One of the most interesting sections in the Dunedin Competitions was the quest for a radio voice. After all, it is of little use for a singer to participate with success in competitions and examinations unless his or her voice is heard by an appreciative audience. But it requires a competent judge to select which of them are good enough to be heard on the air."

Now I would like to know why—given a competent judge—only one of two selected competitors was accepted for a studio recital following a similar contest two years ago? On that occasion there were 48 competitors in the Radio Voice section: only one point separated the two leading competitors—a baritone and a soprano—the latter having her diplomas for A.T.C.L., L.T.C.L., and L.R.S.M. The soprano contestant has been consistently denied a studio recital from 4YA on the alleged grounds that "her voice is not developed yet." Obviously, there are other obstacles between the "competent judge" and the radio audience. What are these obstacles? Does a "competent judge" determine who shall be given opportunities for studio recitals or are the selectors affected by "an old school-tie complex"? In the above circumstances we endorse the viewpoint that "it is of little educational use to the community for a singer to participate with success in competitions and examinations" if some non-altruistic influence or vested interest can keep such trained ability off the air.

"IMPARTIAL LISTENER"
(Timaru).

(We are informed that the Radio Vocal Solo is a section included in their festival programme by the Competitions Society. The Broadcasting Service merely broadcasts all recitals from the Studio on the night of the contest, and the choice for the Competitions Society's prize is made by the Society's adjudicator. It is possible for the placed competitors in this section to be unacceptable to the Broadcasting authorities for regular broadcast engagements. Success in one song only is not sufficient to qualify. On the other hand unsuccessful competitors in the Radio Vocal Solo may already be regular radio performers.—Ed.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

J.F.: No name or address.

M. McKay: (Pahiatua): White American; born Pennsylvania.

Arthur E. E. Ivory (Christchurch): Sorry, but as his visit and lectures were not reported by us, we cannot admit comment upon them.

Inquirer (Dunedin): Suggest you write to the Columbia Gramophone (Aust.) Pty., Paramount Road, Homebush, New South Wales.

Paper Talk (Christchurch): Thanks for suggestion. We are trying it out on your letter.