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Fat and Famous

THE "fat, lazy, wealthy institution" which the world (including Mr. Doidge) knows as the BBC has somehow or other survived for 25 years. It has even won a considerable amount of admiration and envy, though it has had "nothing to force it out of its lethargy and complacency" but the pressure of men and women of intelligence and good taste. How much more famous it might have become under the pressure of the foolish as well no one can say, but it is at least possible that the result would have been a downward drag instead of an upward lift. It does happen sometimes that the blatantly vulgar frighten the ordinary decent into more active vigilance, and Mr. Doidge may be right in supposing that a return to the kind of competition we had in New Zealand not so many years ago would arouse the considerable section of easy-going listeners who are at present quiescent or asleep. Hitler made the democracies realise how precious a thing political liberty is, and how easily it can be lost. Perhaps Mr. Doidge was thinking of that when he said in Parliament last week that there "could be no hope of the best" in broadcasting in New Zealand without competition. It is a possible argument. But if it has any foundation in fact at all, it is a disagreeable argument. It means that the best in New Zealand depends on a further bitter experience of the worst, in spite of the lesson of the BBC and the longer and more sensational experience of the British press. The BBC is the best broadcasting service in the world to-day because it gave itself high standards and kept them. When Mr. Doidge listens to its Jubilee programmes in a week or two he may sigh for the touch of a Press lord's hand and the voice of another who is still. But if he calls the BBC a failure, or even a second-grade service, he will not find it easy to persuade the public that he has given broadcasting either study or thought.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WHOSE OTAGO?

Sir,—In his review of *The Story of Otago* a charge is made by "O.D." that the author, in a distorted picture, presents the southern province as "a swept and garnished Otago of his Puritan imagination." The example chosen is that of the gold-rush period, referring to which the author states that "the gold-diggers were, generally speaking, honest and law-abiding." The implication to the reviewer is that the author "almost thinks they were God-fearing." Le: "O.D." turn to eye-witness accounts (such as that of Gabriel Read), and to historians such as Pember Reeves and Angus Ross. If he still doubts let him turn to Alan Mulgan, who, in the standard history *Maori and Pakeha*, is even more emphatic than the writer of *The Story of Otago*. Says Mulgan, "Considering the conditions under which these raw communities lived, their conduct was astonishingly good." It is unfortunate that "O.D.", in this and other reviews, appears to reveal a regrettable bias against any reference to the beneficial influence of the Christian religion. Still, it must be conceded that "O.D." is a very remarkable old gentleman. He tells us that "the Otago of his (the author's) book is not the Otago that most of us lived in." Very true, for 80 years ago "most of us" had not been born.

A. H. REED (Dunedin).

"TO-NIGHT AT EIGHT"

Sir,—May I be permitted a small space in your journal to express my amazement at L. D. Austin's remarks regarding late-comers. I went to many concerts in Wellington and found that without one exception the entire first portion of the programme was interrupted and very often spoiled, by the continual disturbances made by people who arrived 10, and sometimes 20 minutes late. I think it is fairly sound to say that the majority of these people, if visiting the theatre, would make every effort to arrive on time—and usually succeed.

During a recent performance of Bach's B Minor Mass in Melbourne Town Hall, the doors were closed at eight and were not re-opened until the intermission. This meant a long wait for the late-comers, but was undoubtedly a lesson to them. The audience had an air of relaxation and relief about them and the choir was able to do justice to one of the most beautiful of Bach's works.

Surely Mr. Austin would prefer an uninterrupted performance rather than a disturbed one. There are many thousands of people who are entitled to it because they arrive at eight.

HILARY McCASKEY (Melbourne).

"MASSACRE OF INNOCENTS"

Sir,—How did John the Baptist escape "the decree of King Herod who killed all the children under two years old?" asks "Argosy" (*Listener*, October 24). Answer: By happening to live in one of the few thousand-odd villages of Herod's domain that was not the single one to which this security measure applied.

"Argosy's" own massacre of innocents worries me a good deal more than Herod's ancient one, however. For, if "the wonderful doings and miracles credited to him are enough to (prove) Elijah certainly never existed" who

among our famous ancestors of more than a few generations back is going to be left?

I cannot yet see what interest Romans would have in Christian writers whitewashing the "revolutionary character" of John, a man born outside the Empire well over a century before (B.C. 38), according to "Argosy's" chronology. But if, for some private end of his own (for he certainly has no backing from scholars) he wants to abolish John, Elijah, and Jeremiah I am quite willing, provided he leaves us with three men of the same names (or other names) to

More letters from listeners will be found on Page 20.

produce their writings and historical effects. For certainly things do not get done in this world without men to do them. And certainly few men have so affected the course and character of world history as the Hebrew prophets now being dramatised in the *Men of God* series.

ERGO-NAUGHT (Wellington).

HIGHLIGHT MISSED?

Sir,—I enjoyed the radio play "Elijah, Prophet of Fire," the first of the series *Men of God*, and I am eagerly looking forward to hearing the others. I was sorry, however, that what is one of the highlights of that story was not dealt with. The drama seemed to be working up to it but did not quite get there. After the contest on Mt. Carmel there came the revelation to Elijah:

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

Here, surely, is the climax of the story of Elijah and his message to the world. That in ourselves lies the reason for our faith. The knowledge that we have of right and wrong is the token of our faith in God. Not in the phenomena of nature, but in the realm of personality do we turn for our belief in God. That insight marked one of the significant stepping-stones in religious thought and development.

How this could best have been brought out in a radio version of the story is not my province, but I think its omission mars what is otherwise an excellent portrayal of the character of the man who shaped the prophetic figure for all who were to follow him.

K. O. BATHURST (Hari Hari).

ONE WORLD OR NONE

Sir,—This letter is to express appreciation of the warning note in your editorial column of *The Listener* for October 10. Without having read the scientists' book *One World or None*, some of us have read John Hersey's *Hiroshima* and know that the up-to-date atomic bomb is 1000 times more powerful than that which took 100,000 lives in one minute in Japan. That we be spared the indescribable horror which future war must mean is surely the prayer of millions, yet the answer lies with man himself. Under the leadership of the scientist Einstein, he must insist upon the surrender of national authority to a supra-national authority, simply because "the existence of man as a civilised social being is at stake"

and according to Einstein "there is no other and no cheaper way out of our present situation." Therefore, I for one, write to my M.P. and Prime Minister, remembering the spiritual significance in the words of William Blake, "Bring me my arrows of desire" and hoping the average man the world over will realise his own worth and power.

NELLE BECK (Christchurch).

LIFE IN AMERICA

Sir,—Having read and enjoyed the very well written accounts of life in America by Beatrice Ashton, I was amazed to hear her call herself a Socialist, as it would be impossible to pay a finer compliment to a Capitalistic system than she did. Is she so naive as to think that her two statements are compatible? To my mind her information about conditions in the U.S., which I know is true (I have a sister living there), is conclusive proof that it is time we returned to a Capitalistic system in New Zealand.

HARRY WALKER (Mangere).

"GON TO AYE"

Sir,—I should like to ask your correspondent of last week how he or his "Victorian Principal" could hope to rhyme "Gon" with "consent" in the closing line of Browning's poem—

Which, the voters voted, by common consent,

Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

'Ware pedantry!

CLYDE CARR (Wellington).

GHEWT WITH THE WIND

Sir,—It is the merest flippancy, as "Ex Dudley House, Dorking," will no doubt agree, which prompts me to AIX if she knows what she is DORKING about. But I timidly suggest that perhaps it might be

voted by common consent

'Tis no more than her due who brings good news from GON.

With my (last) respects to the Victorian Principal.

R. BROWNING,

Victorian Poet (Auckland).

KIWI LEAGUE TEAM

Sir,—Many of us want to know why there has been no mention in *The Listener* of any broadcasts of the Kiwi League team's games in England, which I am sure thousands of listeners are very interested in. I hope that it is not because it is League football that there have been such poor rebroadcasting arrangements. I am sure that had it been a tour by the All Blacks listeners would have been able to hear it broadcast twice during the day from all stations, at a convenient time.

SPORT (Woolston).

(Had the All Blacks been touring England, the N.Z. Broadcasting Service would have done just as much as they have done for the League team; that is, rebroadcast everything that the British Broadcasting Corporation has put out. But the matter cannot be entirely controlled here. The N.Z. Broadcasting Service cannot rebroadcast unless it has something available from the transmitters of the country where the matches are being played. The BBC have a problem this season in that there are two international teams touring England from this part of the world—the Australian Rugby Union team and the New Zealand Rugby League team—and the available time has to be shared by these two. In response to cabled representations, the BBC increased the time originally intended to be devoted to broadcasts of the League games in England. It was, apparently, not possible for them to do any more.—Ed.).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS

Teen-Ager (Auckland): No name or address. Marjorie M. Linton (Lower Hutt): Unfortunately not possible.