

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

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Dry Weather Penalties

AS we write this article there has been no rain in most parts of New Zealand for more than a month. Big areas of bush and grass lie exposed to the match of the first passing fool, and only other fools are not anxious. But drought brings other anxieties as well as the fear of fire, and brings them more rapidly in normally wet areas than in the normally dry. They would be only mildly amused in Australia to be told that we are drying up in New Zealand, but in fact we can dry very quickly and very dangerously, as every farmer and fruit-grower knows, and every householder whose economy is tied to electric light and power and to a public supply of water. We have spent a hundred years destroying most of nature's checks on the rapid loss of water, and it will require another hundred years, in so steep and windy a country, to restore those checks. In the meantime we shall live dangerously. But it is not necessary to live untidily as well. It is just disgraceful that every sea-beach handy to a New Zealand city, every frequently used area of bush, every picnic ground, and nearly every public park should be littered at this time of year with paper-bags, ice-cream cartons, cigarette packets, and sometimes even with discarded food. How unnecessary it all is appears at once in most of our motor-camps, where a tradition has been established in 10 years against untidiness and filth, and no visitor thinks of breaking it. Litter not only adds to fire risks and encourages disease. It breeds mental and moral slovenliness without any compensation at all.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

LOCAL TALENT.

Sir,—Your correspondent, "Still Hoping," is to be commended for the sentiments expressed in connection with the above matter. I will agree with your footnote, and grant you that compositions will be considered if submitted to the Broadcasting authorities, but that does not go far enough. To enable New Zealand writers to establish themselves, the Australian idea should be adopted. A definite portion of radio time is allotted to Australian writers—it was 2½% of the total time at first, but was later increased to 5%, because so many good numbers were forthcoming. One result of this publicity is that Australian writers have no difficulty in finding markets for their works, recording companies will take their songs on a commercial basis, and the writers are given much encouragement.

"Plugging" of numbers is extensively practised in America, also in Britain, and, to a lesser degree, in Australia. We are not so innocent of this offence here, either. When a big musical film is about to be released, one will hear the numbers from this film on the air from all stations at various times. Now, the revenue from the playing of these numbers goes to the country of origin, that is, where the copyright holder lives. Therefore we pay fees for listening in order that others may benefit. If New Zealand works were used, these payments would be made to our own writers. Further, if New Zealand compositions were given the same amount of "air" publicity as these foreign works, a market would be created, for that is how the present market is built up now. A strange thing about commercial broadcasting is that firms who operate in New Zealand, on New Zealand capital, selling goods made by New Zealand labour, to New Zealand people, turn to American music with which to sell their products. Why not go the whole distance, and use New Zealand songs, etc., in the programmes. I am certain the listeners would be very happy, and in turn would support the firms who were "big" enough to do this.

DAVID S. SHARP.

(Vice-President and Organiser, Canterbury Branch, New Zealand Composers, Artists, and Writers' Society).

THE LITERARY SINK.

Sir,—I thank Ralph Unger for his brilliant satire on the pattern of certain present-day writing. It should put the lid on some of the inadequate Zolaesque work that has been appearing in recent printings. A good deal of it is a pose. Frank Sargeson describes the filling up of a hole, recently dug, and alleges that the soil was rammed so tight that very little was left over when the filling was completed. Any navvy knows that you cannot fill a hole with what you took out of it, not to mention ramming.

An article or an essay by reason of its subject matter may lend itself to arid meticulousity, but may some kindly god defend the short story from becoming a cross section of humdrum domestic life without beginning, end, or right to be at all. Dean Swift states somewhere that "When it is going to rain you find the sink strike your offended sense with double stink." I quote from memory. This is a fruity tip to housewives with a heavy wash in prospect, but surely the short story, perhaps the most delightful of all literary prose forms, is not the vehicle to convey it.

Let the war and its aftermath be left to the specialists. We don't need horror

stories. We know the wicked prosper, that most dogs are under-dogs, that in life happy endings are more the result of sweat and tears than a happy fortuity of events, that Russian writers can mirror weeks of the protracted agonies of a horse, old, diseased, and denied the mercy of a knock on the head. Why revel with the Russians? Sursum corda. Back to the nursery for a spot of make-believe.

E. A. W. SMITH (Christchurch).

TICK-TOCK

Sir,—I should be grateful for the opportunity of expressing appreciation of a regular feature in the broadcast programmes, to which, as far as I know, there has not been any reference in recent years.

It may very well be that with regard to radio programmes there are generally accepted standards of judgment, but of these I am ignorant. However, I am sure that there would be widespread agreement that account must be taken of such factors as tonal purity, appropriateness of rhythm, accuracy in factual representation, integrity in emotional expression, catholicity of appeal, seasonableness in appearance, and convincing definition of authoritative judgment. By these canons, I cannot consider any feature to be of greater merit than the most regular of all. Nor can I think that there is any doubt about its most beneficent influence in the promotion of order in the community and the settlement of vexatious disputes. I may add that it is enthusiastically welcomed by all in our household, including the 13-months-old junior member with his vigorous equivalent of "Time Tick."

PYTHAGORAS (Christchurch).

RADIO SPEECH.

Sir,—On Boxing Day we heard a very fluent commentary on the running of the Auckland Cup and there is no doubt that the commentator "knows his onions." It seems unfortunate, however, that any announcer should be allowed to broadcast to Australia and New Zealand, and include such words as "heow," "neow," "eout," etc., in his vocabulary. Surely it is time that the NZBS formed a definite policy with regard to the pronunciation of its announcers and commentators. In Britain, the BBC is supposed to set the standard, and with similar opportunities, the NZBS should follow suit and set a standard for this country; but if the present state of affairs continues, there will be no standard at all in New Zealand soon and she will become a state of "Ostrailia" as far as speech is concerned.

The matter is becoming urgent in all fields of broadcasting.

H. C. WRIGHT (Wellington).

BEETHOVEN AND BACH.

Sir,—Recently in the same week the NZBS broadcast two works by common consent the greatest of their respective composers—Bach's B Minor Mass and Beethoven's Missa Solennis. This prompts me to ask, as an ordinary music-lover, why it is that in our more exalted musical circles Beethoven is usually given only grudging praise, while it is implied that Bach is the greatest of all composers and that his music is only to be approached with reverential awe.

Why not admit frankly that Bach's music evokes no great enthusiasm

among the non-executant class of music-lovers? To them, the long-drawn-out fugal development, markedly apparent in the Brandenburg Concerti and the B Minor Mass, is dreary and monotonous. The trained ear can doubtless perceive the various permutations, but to the majority of listeners it is just aural mathematics. I suspect that the reason for the constant denigration of Beethoven by some is that they are antipathetic to the spirit immanent in his work. In another art, such people would, I suppose, prefer Milton to Dante.

I do ask, however, that Bach-lovers cease from stating or implying, that it is an incontrovertible fact that Bach is the supreme composer. I want some reasons in support of that contention.

"NAIVE LISTENER" (Hamilton).

CINEMA ORGAN MUSIC

Sir,—May I protest against the number of cinema organ recordings that pollute the programmes of the Wellington broadcasting stations. It is a pity that all four stations seem enamoured of this form of instrumental music. A certain amount of it is all right, but the ear quickly tires of the lush tones, and the excessive use of the tremolant, that characterise the cinema organ. In place of the constant strains of this instrument I suggest more classical music, or more of the excellent talks that have been given lately. "ORGAN STOP"

(Raumati).

"WHO STEALS MY PURSE"

Sir,—I am indebted to "Cock-a-doodle" and F. W. Reeve for their attempts to provide "Three Dumb Clucks" with an explanation of A. P. Gaskell's story, but I am wondering whether the Dumb Clucks are satisfied; at any rate, I am not. What I want to know is how the cash box came to be short. The only possible clue I can see is that reference to the hero's £4 error in dictation; and this, if it is a clue, seems far too vague. Both C.A.D. and F.W.R. are right, as far as they go, but I was so perplexed at my inability to find out "whodunit" that for me the point was lost. I believe that my difficulty was also the Dumb Clucks', and consider the lack of clarity on this point must have marred the story for many others beside myself. M.A. (Palmerston North).

THE UNITY OF RELIGIONS

Sir,—Your reviewer indicts Bhagavan Das on two counts: (1) he is indifferent to western beliefs; (2) he twists Biblical texts to fit his thesis.

On the first charge he is excusable. A member of a "backward" race ("heathen," I regret to say), Mr. Pecksniff would have remarked) the eminent Savant doubtless escaped the benefits of Christian tuition; hence his iconoclasm. On the second: the "interpretations" of ancient Hindu writings by European Sanscritists—notably Dr. Weber and Professor Max Muller—certainly provide a comical precedent. Dr. Das is a little old for such childishness. It was thought common knowledge that the Higher Criticism had effectively disposed of the "inspirational" theory by showing how interpolations added through the centuries have distorted the original meaning of texts, often entirely changing the sense. So Pandit Das's omissions and interpolations are, in fact, evidence of literary integrity.

RUSTIC (Waipukurau).

(Abridged.—Ed.)