

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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Fireworks

A CORRESPONDENT asks to-day if we don't "find it shocking" that Dunedin should have "wasted" thousands of pounds in an hour or two on fireworks. Our answer is that we should have been shocked if Dunedin had not been willing to spend money on such an occasion in such a way. In other words we do not agree that the money was wasted. It was spent, and there may have been nothing afterwards to show for the expenditure but a hundred thousand happy people; but much money is spent every day, legitimately and wisely, on delights that leave nothing but memories behind. It is not foolish and wasteful to take account of the fact that there is a child in every man, a wide-eyed little girl in every grown-up woman. Not to take account of that is foolish and wasteful since it is, first, false, and in the second place dangerous. Fireworks every night would be wasteful, or every week or month; but a few thousand pounds going off with a fizz and a bang once in a hundred years is neither extravagant nor purposeless. It is one of the thousand ways by which wise parents keep their children happy, wise rulers their people happy, and wise individuals their miserable little selves happy when they are slipping down the slope of over-seriousness. It is release from tension, escape from fear and darkness, at a price that the poorest can easily pay. Precisely what the recent display cost Dunedin we don't know; but our correspondent says three thousand pounds, and if we double his figures to allow for the preparations that preceded the display and for the cleaning up afterwards, it is still only about a shilling a head for the vast crowds who looked on. It is not very reckless to bang a shilling instead of sixpence once in a hundred years. Nor were the shillings taken from the world's starving millions. They were taken from the inhibited fools that we all are some of the time, and they are more likely to give extra meals to the millions than to take a single crust away.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

FOOD OR SMOKE?

Sir,—Don't you find it shocking that Dunedin should have wasted three thousand pounds on fireworks when millions in the world are starving? Three thousand pounds would have provided five thousand food parcels for Europe, but Dunedin found it more amusing to send the parcels up in smoke.

OPOHO (Dunedin).

(We comment on this letter in our leading article.—Ed.)

WORLD HOPES

Sir,—Charles Langton, in saying that: "We attribute personality to God for this reason: We are persons," completely sustains my contention that we become embroiled and befogged with our own personalities so soon as we begin to think of a personal Deity. If a crocodile had similar mental capacities to ours it might conclude that the Deity must be a crocodile.

Mr. Langton is sure the universe cannot have come out of nothing, for he says "nothing can give what it has not got." Let us agree, and mildly enquire: "Where did God come from?" If, as is contended, He existed before all else, it seems reasonable to submit that nothing must have produced God. If that is not admitted, we find ourselves involved in the question: "Out of whom or out of what did God come?" and go on ad infinitum asking out of whom or out of what did God's ancestors come?

"G.H.D." illustrates what I mean when I say that God is a term used in an endeavour to express the inexpressible and the inconceivable. He says that "St. Thomas was aware that for the human intellect the Deity is incomprehensible." But just before that he quotes St. Thomas as saying that "God's essence contains every perfection." This is a contradiction since it is clear that the incomprehensible must be the unknown and nobody knows what the unknown contains. W. B. Olphert charges me with trying "to set a boundary to religious development which is essentially boundless." No such aim ever entered my head. I doubt very much whether the human mind can really conceive boundlessness.

In an irrational universe it is a bold assumption that the Creator is rational. The Hebraic portrait presented in the Old Testament exhibits the Deity as displaying many of humanity's worst attributes. Modern theologians write elegant articles to explain to us the nature of God and His reasons for making the universe as it is—just as if they had had afternoon tea with the Deity and got to know all about it.

It comforts many to conceive a sort of amorphous glorification of man as author of the universe. It fits in with our grand hallucination that the world and all therein was created specially for man. But it is possible to realise

that we come from we don't know where; are here for we don't know why; and go to we don't know where; and yet live a rational and happy life. One only needs to grow old enough not to be afraid of the dark and of the unknown, and for it to be unnecessary, spiritually, to be holding anyone's hand. A harmonious and quiet mind can lie open to inspirations that come from we don't know where but are as real and beautiful as the tones from a violin under a master hand. There may be one Supreme Being, and there may a thousand Deities—nobody knows. We know that there is a struggle between what we call good and what we call evil, and the universe has never yet known the complete supremacy of either.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

CORRECTION

Sir,—I wonder if I may forestall the vigilance of your readers by pointing out that two phrases in my review of *The Co-operative Movement at Home and Abroad* have in the editing become telescoped into one. I am made to speak of Swiss settlements in Palestine instead of "the Swiss co-operative village of Freidorf or the Jewish community settlements in Palestine."

DAVID HALL (Wellington).

"CHALLENGE OF THE CITIES"

Sir,—On February 7 I listened to the above broadcast. After each city had had its turn, we heard "This is the voice of Judgment." What he should have said was "This is the voice of mis-judgment." Fancy putting a large crowd at a football match in Auckland first with four points, over the 50-year record of the Wellington Boys' Institute, and worse still Canterbury's Lord Rutherford, the man who split the atom, etc. In my opinion Canterbury was easily first, Wellington easily second, and Auckland and Dunedin about equal next. A few more of these mis-judgments will kill the interest in the *Challenge of the Cities*.

A. G. BARNES (Auckland).

A LISTENER FROM ENGLAND

Sir,—I agree to some extent with "Hopeful" as regards New Zealand programmes and *The Listener*, but not entirely with the Editor's note. In the current issue of the *New Zealand Listener* 20 pages out of 25 are devoted to matter unrelated to that which the title of the paper would lead one to suppose. The English *Listener* devotes itself to all wireless matter: often printing previous talks which are of interest, hereby bringing before its readers items it might have been impossible for them to hear and allowing others to further consider the talk.

If extraneous matter were deleted from the *New Zealand Listener* and

especially the two pages devoted to cooking (more suitable for women's journals) and advertisements curtailed, a very satisfactory combination of the English *Listener* and *Radio Times* could be evolved.

ANOTHER FROM BRITAIN

(Te Atatu).

(The English *Listener* prints both recipes and advertisements—as well as much material that has not been broadcast—book reviews, for example, poems, and long articles on art.—Ed.)

"LANDFALL"

Sir,—There are a few points in your review of *Landfall* No. 4 on which I would take issue with you. Firstly, the best reviews in our daily papers, the work of such critics as Messrs. Holcroft, Schroeder, and Curnow, are so good that it is hard to see how writers for a magazine could improve upon them. Secondly, *Landfall*, despite your contrary opinion, is talked about by a considerable number of people who are neither contributors nor subscribers. I am one such. Although, probably, the "intellectual" readers in New Zealand are as large a proportion of the population as in England, we have far too few people in this country for such a magazine as *Landfall* ever to be really popular.

RON J. SCARLETT (Dunedin).

SPORTS BROADCASTS

Sir,—This is just to echo the four good letters (in a recent issue) of protest against the sports broadcasts. There are some people who wish for peace and beauty in the holiday time, when they have more leisure than usual to enjoy what is on a high level.

"LISTENER" (Eastbourne).

BACH AND BEETHOVEN

Sir,—Messrs. Bach and Beethoven are creating quite a furore, but it is not a fresh issue. The trained man in music has always displayed an unconscious condescension towards the mere fan or worshipper. From their holy Pantheon, the "Elect" aloofly probe and analyse the art and the genius that lurks amid the cold welter of quavers and arpeggios which make the printed sheet. On the opus they lay their laurel or they bring a crown of thorns—good or bad; great or mediocre.

But whether the wreath wilts or the thorns wound deep—that rests with the couple in the back stalls and the family round the radio. They alone may exercise the final vote. So wherefor do we bicker? Bach or Gershwin, Weber or Falla. It is as easy as that!

CLIFF DOWE (Mosgiel).

STAGECRAFT FOR AMATEURS

Sir,—May I offer a pat on the back to the NZBS for arranging, and a hearty crack a little lower down to *The Listener* for being so late in drawing my attention to, the excellent series *Stagecraft for the Amateur*. That is just the sort of stuff we want. It's a pity it can't become a permanent feature. But why, oh why do all these programmes get put on from 2YH, 3ZR, 4-whatever-it-is, in towns so remote that nobody here has even heard of them? Can't we have a little of this sort of thing up north? Shall I tell Professor Shelley about it, do you think, or would it be easier simply to move my household right down to Greymouth?

M. A. NIXON (North Auckland).

OTAGO CENTENNIAL ISSUE

ON March 23, Otago Province will attain its Centenary. In the hundred years which have elapsed since 1848, the men and women of Otago—in their institutions, in themselves, and in their ideas and ideals—have played a vital part in the moulding of New Zealand. To mark the occasion, and to pay tribute to these people and these ideas, next week's issue of "The Listener" will be an Otago Centennial Number.