

JULY 30, 1948

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Keeping Cool

THE only good news from Berlin as we write this note is that both sides are keeping cool. The lack of heat is in fact marked enough to be uncanny; not exactly alarming; not in itself suspicious; but so unusual that many people will be disturbed by it and wonder what it means. But the simplest explanation is the best. There is nothing to get excited about. Each side, now, knows what the other is doing, and why, and while that does not lessen the gravity of the crisis it leaves nothing for the sensation-mongers to exploit. In other words we are past the stage of "How dare you?" and "What do you mean?" and arrived at that dangerous point at which a push or a bump could start the fighting. But if the coolness means neither peace nor war it extends the time in which peace is still possible. And the best hope of peace, if the lull continues, is the absence on one side or the other of any sufficient cause for war. However annoying it may be to the Russians to have the Western nations in Berlin it is not a matter of life or death to them to get the city into their own hands. However committed the Western nations are to staying in, now when the Russians have tried to shoulder them out and they have declared to the world that they will not go, they certainly don't wish to go to war on a face-saving issue alone. Both sides will fight if they must, but if they can find a saner way than war they will take it—unless the situation really is that Russia has decided to take what she now thinks the best hour for fighting her way through to her goal. If that is the case the challenge will be accepted; and we must not allow ourselves to think that it is beyond the range of possible developments. But we can place it among the probable issues only if we suppose that Russia is already mad with ambition and the sense of power—a difficult supposition however anxious or suspicious we may be.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WHAT WOMEN WANT ON THE AIR

Sir,—Listening to the debate from 2YA on "What Should a Radio Service Give Its Listeners?" two of us decided with some warmth that a highly important point affecting women had been missed, Marion Waite, the one woman in the debate, discussed what women wanted, but neither she nor any of the men said the thing we two, man and woman, were waiting for—that, by and large, men's and women's interests are identical. True, women have special interests, such as children and the kitchen, but in these days when the husband has to do more mending and minding and minding, even this gap is narrowing. Men also have special interests, but as an increasing number of women are observing, you don't have "Men's World" as a heading in the newspaper, or special talks for men over the air. Newspaper editors are probably unaware how "Woman's World," with its chief emphasis on housekeeping and fashion, infuriates some women. The suggestion is that these things are and will continue to be the chief mental occupation of women. More serious topics are the concern of men. Women are a division of humans to be played down to. One sees the same thing often in private social gatherings. It is taken as a matter of course that the women shall huddle together all evening and the men talk among themselves. I wish men could hear the blistering comment of women on this arrangement. The truth is that women are, or should be, interested in all general things that also concern men—public affairs and all the infinite variety of life. In the words of Ibsen's heroine in one of the greatest moments in modern drama, women demand to be treated like human beings. There was a chance to say this emphatically in the broadcast discussion, but it wasn't seized.

"LOST CHANCE" (Wellington).

MUSIC AND NATIONALITY

Sir,—I was interested in the comments made in *The Listener* by New Zealand musicians on the subject of Sir Thomas Beecham's campaign against foreign influence in England's musical life. I am not British born, but owing to my work in the last war, I believe I am familiar with the needs of the British concert public and the problems of British musicians. I therefore hope you may care to publish my views on the above subject.

England has in the past decade or two acquired the leadership in the musical world. This is not due to foreign visitors, but to the very high standard of British performers and to the indisputable fact that England has in the past few years produced a far greater number of noteworthy composers than any other country. One of your contributors rightly stresses that "competition" means raising the standard, and therefore progress. It is only in this noble sense that the word "competition" should be used in our profession. If a musician has a great success, it is one for his fellow musicians too, for it is a success for the cause of music and thus stimulates interest in it.

On a recent Sunday I heard a broadcast talk (from Station 1YA) given by a representative of Trinity College on

present-day musical life in England. It was heartening to hear from such an authoritative source that there is now an ever-growing desire among the English concert public to learn more about music. Information is bound to increase discriminating concert audiences, and thus the magic of the foreign names is rapidly being replaced by the ability to take every musician according to his value.

But the root of the problem is whether music can afford to be nationalistic without endangering its inmost spirit. Gustav Mahler, not less great a musician

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than Sir Thomas, remarked on this subject 40 years ago: "The greater a musician, the farther he leaves nationality behind." Surely music should bring us to a better understanding of our fellow beings and to that brotherhood among men which alone can make this world a place worth living in.

GERHARD WILLNER (Auckland.)

W. G. GRACE

Sir,—I much enjoyed A.M.'s tribute to W. G. Grace. He does not say that he saw W.G. play; I did, on several occasions. I first saw W.G. play on the Taunton ground, a small ground with a splendid pitch. Somerset, captained by the redoubtable S. M. J. Woods, who played Rugby and cricket for England, was meeting Gloucestershire, in June 1895—one of W.G.'s two great batting years. He scored 187 not out, and Somerset was decisively beaten. In the Somerset team was L. C. H. Palairer, one of the most graceful cricketers, a model for all players. A curious incident occurred in this match. I was a very small boy, and my recollection is that one of the Gloucestershire batsmen hurt a leg, and called for a substitute to run for him. W.G. sent out Board—later well-known in New Zealand—who was very spry at stealing runs. Sammy Woods objected to Board: W.G. maintained that he could send out any player. Woods said No, the other captain must agree to the substitute. I forget how it was settled. The point was referred to the M.C.C. for a decision.

The description of W.G. as a bowler, quoted by A.M. is good, and true as far as it goes "an enormous man rushing tip to the wicket. . . a great black beard," etc. But what sort of a ball did this giant of a man, this famous figure, send down? The young batsman facing W.G. for the first time, nervously, naturally expected a very fast ball. W.G. bowled at quite medium pace, the batsman played much too soon, and was generally bowled.

A curious incident concerns W.G. and Dan Leno, at the time the most popular of music-hall comedians. At the end of his career Dan Leno became mentally weak and retired. W.G. with his own team—London County, I think it was called—had played a fine innings in a match at Bournemouth. In the evening he went to the Pavilion to hear Dan Godfrey's band. The audience of course recognised him, beard and all, and cheered. Poor Dan Leno was in the audience, and he—who had been cheered by thousands nightly—thought

the cheering was for him, and to the dismay of his attendant rose and bowed. Later I saw Dan Leno's funeral; with the exception of Queen Victoria's funeral which I had seen a little before, I have never seen such genuinely affected crowds, thousands of them, at a funeral. L.E. (Auckland).

"CARMEN."

Sir,—The other evening I went to a performance of Bizet's Grand Opera *Carmen* and came away with mixed feelings of admiration and disgust; admiration for the performance and disgust for Bizet and his librettist. Apart from such minor blemishes as Done José who tottered so pallid with passion that at one moment I thought he would faint away, and Escamillo who I consider would be just the right man to play the statue in the last act of *Don Giovanni*—apart from this the performance was well done and reflected credit on the work the artists undoubtedly spent on it. But why dignify *Carmen* with the title Grand Opera when it is surely no better or grander than operetta? The vigour, the brooding atmosphere of the Mérimée novel or rather short story is reduced to an insipid Victorian melodrama with pseudo-Spanish local colour.

The fact that *Carmen* already had a husband is decorously left out, and to show that vice meets with its own evil reward a virtuous Micaela is introduced who tearfully tries by means of such subterfuges as letters from a dying mother to a worthless son, etc., to lead Don José back to the straight and narrow. Poor Micaela—even her glorious voice did little to compensate for the extreme fatuity of her role.

And the dialogue! It may have been all right in French, but the translation is merely doggerel. A chorus in the Fourth Act "Come and Buy One" struck me as having a curious resemblance to that popular ditty "Clementine." Even the audience saw the bathos of some of the scenes for there were obvious titters. Bizet's music fails equally with the libretto to capture anything of the Mérimée atmosphere. It's all so superficial and pretty-pretty. When *Carmen* and company are enacting a tense moment ridiculous twitterings are heard on the flutes, and after every chorus there is the ominous quiver on the violins, to set the mood of the next dark deed, I suppose.

E. F. KAYE
(College House, Christchurch).

JAPANESE WORDS

Sir,—The interest with which I have listened to many of the broadcasts "With the Kiwis in Japan" received a rude shock to-night when the compère continually pronounced "Kyoto" and "Tokyo" in three syllables instead of two, and capped this with "Tackarazooka" for "Takurazuka" repeated many times, although the correct pronunciations were clearly audible from the Japanese to whom he was speaking. One of the first things the stranger in Japan learns is that "u" sounds are swallowed so as to be almost inaudible grunts. My own stay in Japan was pre-war and only of three months, but some of this evening's pronunciations made my flesh creep.

"LINGUA" (Wellington).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Vox Populi" (New Lynn): We do not print attacks on any church.

H. Willacy (Auckland): "Berenice" was written by Handel in 1737. It was one of his last efforts in the field of opera.