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After Many Years

IT is good for us when a New Zealander who knows other countries, who has lived abroad and worked abroad without forgetting where he came from, comes back again and criticises us; and it is especially good when he is a man of strong character and high intelligence. We must therefore welcome the sharp criticism of New Zealand attributed in a cable last week to Dr. L. J. Comrie, Superintendent of the Nautical Almanac. Dr. Comrie is one of the most distinguished living New Zealanders in the calm grey world of mathematics. If he does not know all the secrets of the heavens he knows enough of them to edit the sailor's bible and "say when" to thousands of anxious owners and navigators. And he does not like what has happened to us in his long absence from Pukekohé. We don't want to get on, he thinks, and we don't want to serve; we don't want to be criticised, and we don't want to pay for our leisure; our hotels are poor, we are not selling our scenery, and as for "the long New Zealand week-end," its dreariness, he says, astounded him. Well that is a rather moving jeremiad from a prophet of 55, and it is clear that we had better pull up our socks. We had better do it before we get his really long-whiskered admonitions; but it is not irreverent to wonder while we are doing it how a compiler of almanacs can find time heavy. How can any man of science not know what to do with himself anywhere, especially if he has a photographic memory like Dr. Comrie's. If philosophy fails us when we have reduced all knowledge to symbols, have we not floated too long and too high in cold thin air? And if our bowels boil when we see "magnificent scenery" as nature made it, without hotels, tourists, and touts, have we not forgotten that there are other things to do with mountains than to "pluck the spoil out of their teeth?"

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WHAT WOMEN WANT ON THE AIR

Sir,—Could I put in a plea for housewives' lunch hours? If the family is away for lunch, and the baby is still asleep, surely this is the time for a little mental stimulation for mother? A 15-minute talk twice a week would help, a scene from a play, a decent serial, or, when it comes to music, something a little gayer, a little more definite than this unspeakably featureless feature known as the Luncheon Music programme. I have long since given up ZB listening because I know every

his symphony, "The Expiring Egg," or Siegfried Q. Snodgrass, composer of "Honey Child, Yuh Drive Me Wild." As for his idea of dropping atomic bombs on us lovers of Guggenheim and Finklebaum simply because we are highbrows and devote much time and study to these masters, I can only quote the words of the great modern composer Serge Terousas in his beautiful work, "Smile on the Dial":

Give a big, big smile to yuh neighbour,
And yuh neighbour will smile back at you.

Give a big, big smile to yuh neighbour,
Though yuh dentures may pop 'nto view.

NEW FREQUENCIES

CHANGES in the frequencies and call-signs of New Zealand broadcasting stations, which will come into force on September 1, will not affect the quality of reception obtained from radio receivers. Some listeners are apparently under the impression that the change-over will make mechanical adjustment of their radios necessary. This is quite incorrect. The new frequencies will simply mean that some stations will occupy new positions on the tuning-dial; the new call-signs, that some stations will be broadcasting under new names. Station 1YX, for example, will become 1YC, and so on. To help listeners accustom themselves to the changes, a special supplement will be published with "The Listener" of August 27.

advertising cliché off by heart, and the standard of the programmes from all the National stations between 12.0 and 1.30 p.m. seems, with the exception of two weekly farm talks, to be invariably tame. By all means let us have the old favourites in a programme of their own for those who care to listen, but be ruthless with the rest of the depressing trash in the perpetual lunch-time hotch-potch. To attempt to offend no one is very likely to please no one, so, if it must be music, what about some Bach—or Jive, if you like—but something good

ALL ALONE (Cashmere).

£1000 ART SCHOLARSHIP

Sir,—In your account of this scholarship in *The Listener* of July 16 there is an error in the statement regarding the number of member societies belonging to the Association of New Zealand Art Societies. Only three such societies are mentioned. There are in fact five member societies, viz., The Auckland Society of Arts, the Waikato Art Society, the Hawke's Bay Art Society, the Nelson Suter Art Society and the N.Z. Institute of Architects.

I shall be glad if you will publish this correction.

A. J. WAGHORN

(Chairman, Standing Committee, Association of N.Z. Art Societies).

MUSICAL NOMENCLATURE.

Sir,—In reply to I. Bragh (Wellington) may I say that I find it almost incredible that anyone in this country has not heard of the world famous composers, Carrington P. Guggenheim and J. Macgregor Finklebaum, to say nothing of the great Dimitri Murphy. As the noted musical critic and impresario Egbert Raspopoff has so truly said "Mendelssohn, Liszt, Mozart—Bah!—even a tom-cat the noises makes! For feeling, depth, length, breadth, width—what can equal the works of Guggenheim."

I. Bragh will be saying next that he has never heard of Nicolai O'Toole and

Speaking of atomic bombs, I should imagine that even I. Bragh will grant the versatility of the same Serge Terousas when within a few days of the falling of the first atomic bomb he startled the musical world with his wonderful composition, "This Bomb Atomic Upsets My Stomach."

Sir, let me beg for tolerance between earnest students of music and those who, perhaps, listen more for light entertainment. Personally, although many of my friends listen to the works of Sir Edward Bach and Felix Chopin, I always make a point of refraining from criticism and try to understand their views.

JOHN McDUGALL (Tauranga).

BACKGROUND MUSIC

Sir,—I protest against the spoiling of a very good programme by inappropriate and quite unnecessary background music. I refer to the Sunday afternoon programme *From Noble Pens* broadcast from 3YA. It was particularly annoying during Robert Newman's moving rendering of "To An Hour Glass." I admit that in certain programmes the judicious use of music adds much to the effect. However this was not one of them. The beauty of the words, well spoken as they were, was sufficient in itself.

And now let me hand out a bouquet for another feature. That is *Gilbert and Sullivan*. It was one of the finest BBC programmes the service has yet given us.

JOHN R. BEST

(Timaru).

BURNS' NICHT.

Sir,—I was interested and amused when I read "Kilmarnock Lassie's" letter concerning ZB's Robert Burns programme. Personally I enjoyed every bit of it and had no idea there were so many flaws in it till I read her letter. I come from Glasgow myself but can't say I'm qualified to know the kind of speech spoken in every part of it, so I'm, perhaps, being rather rash in saying that I didn't hear anything wrong in that programme. I did, in fact, enjoy every

minute of it and could have listened to a lot more. I rather thought it must have been recorded in Scotland and was surprised to learn it was done here.

So I congratulate the actors, who, in my humble opinion, made a fine job of it. I hope they won't be scared off by "Kilmarnock Lassie's" letter and refrain from attempting similar programmes. I'd like to assure them that every Scot in the country did not writhe or even wriggle. I noticed, however, that the writer of one *Radio Views* paragraph was more or less in agreement with your correspondent, but as he admits to not being a Scotchman his opinion is neither here nor there.

GLESCA' LASSIE (Marton).

FIRMER BRICKS

Sir,—I have been buying *The Listener* for some time now and think it is an excellent publication. But what has happened to *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh*? On Saturday night I tuned in

More letters from listeners will be found on page 18

to 2YA as usual at 8.30, but a new programme had replaced it. Also what exactly was the announcer trying to tell listeners, when in the stock exchange report from 2YA last week, he informed us that "Consolidated Bricks were firmer?"

PUNGA BILL (Manunui).

(Station 2YA advises that the programme mentioned ran the usual course and finished with the last episode.—Ed.)

OVERDOING TIME

Sir,—Of all the irritating things for which radio is responsible, by far the most irritating, in my opinion, is the action of announcers everywhere in coming to the microphone every two, three, or four minutes over long periods, morning, noon, and night, and blurring out the time, just as if they were time-keepers first and the rest of their job was only incidental. They seem to forget that John Listener has had his clock and his watch repaired by now. Of course you don't catch the announcers bursting in on a wrestling match, or a fight, or a sermon, or a "conshirto," or a session of Parliament. I think that if we were told at every change of programme (say every quarter- or half-hour) what the time was that would be "tons."

"COUNTRY COUSIN"
(Blenheim).

FRUIT AND CAUSTIC SODA

Sir,—In reply to my letter on the above subject (*Listener*, July 16) is this comment from the Health Department—"It is a fact that in commercial canning processes many fruits are dipped in a weak caustic soda solution to blanch them, or remove the skin. This is a carefully regulated process."

Now, however carefully regulated the process may be, if the caustic soda is sufficiently strong to blanch the fruit or remove the skin some must enter the pulp and so be injurious to the health of the person who eats that fruit. Surely we can avoid the use of such a dangerous corrosive poison as caustic soda in the canning of fruit.

POISONS (Wellington).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT

J.C.M. (Karori): Many thanks. "Jackdaw" is right about the words, not about the numbers.