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## The New Frequencies

MARK TWAIN wrote a story once about a man who forgot his own funeral. We should not like to suggest that there are relatives of that man in New Zealand or, if there were, that the accident might happen again. But there are other accidents to which the forgetful are exposed when nobody calls time for them—some serious and some ludicrous—and it was of these we were thinking when we prepared and printed the supplement given away with this issue. We were thinking not only of the careless man but of the man who is so much a creature of habits that it takes an earthquake to change his ways. We are all that man some of the time and one purpose of this supplement is to make earthquakes unnecessary. Thousands of listeners must put up this week with a disturbed listening routine, and if they don't want a worse thing to happen to them they must spend some time studying the change. The details are set out in this issue and printed separately on a durable sheet, but that is only our contribution. The listener's contribution is careful reading and if he refuses to make it there is not much more that we can do for him. We can't get him to the right church at the right time or have him listening to the right racing results at the right time if he will not take the trouble to find out when and where to listen. If he wants Beethoven and gets jive, waits for the wool sales and gets family planning, he has our sympathy. But sympathy is all we shall allow him. We shall not accept responsibility for him whether he misses a train or misses a serial, goes fishing when the rivers are muddy, or finds himself listening to a wrestling-bout when he hoped for "The Wings of a Dove."

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## THE TEACHING OF SEX

Sir,—I listened with great interest to the three speakers in "Sunday Forum." As a teacher, mother, and grandmother, I ought to have views on "The Teaching of Sex." I consider that ignorance is the mother of misery, and suppression of this essential knowledge is unfair to the adolescent boy or girl. But I cannot agree that the subject should be taught by a school teacher. It is a matter for the Department of Public Health. Four or five talks could be given during the last term at school by a woman doctor to girls, and by a man doctor to boys. No one else can explain the matter so well or so impersonally, and the boys and girls leaving school would realise that this is an essential part of their education.

The New Zealand Broadcasting Service have done well in having an open discussion on this subject.

E. M. YOUNG (Upper Hutt).

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

Sir,—Children sometimes mistake the drift of words, and so comprehension is clouded. The fault in such a case is not that of the child.

The following is the correct version:  
We're going to the Mansions on the Happy Day Express:  
The letters on the engine are J-E-S-U-S.  
The guard calls out, "For Heaven!"  
I gladly answer, "Yes!"  
We're going to the Mansions on the Happy Day Express.

I first heard the words of this chorus in the County of Takaka about 16 years ago. They were then taught to a gathering of children by an English lady, who was a qualified English schoolteacher, a person of more than average culture, and also no mean theologian.

D. S. EVANS, C. of E.  
(Motupiko).

Sir,—"Observer" wonders if any kind of value can be derived from allegorising an express, with the engine marked J-E-S-U-S. To the nine-year-old of our mobile world does not the picture immediately suggest power, strength, and leadership (rather a change from the "Gentle Jesus meek and mild" of yesterday). Surely the singing of a thrilling journey with the Great Master is more conducive to the "Lo I am with you always" kind of thinking than the bleating of, say, "There's a friend for little children above the bright blue sky."

M. LOWE (Taumarunui).

Sir,—We are all indebted to "Observer" for bringing to notice a rather silly verse taught during religious instruction. It is to be hoped, however, that "Observer" does not consider this sort of thing typical of the Nelson system generally. Certainly it was not so in my schooldays, nor, I believe, is it to-day. Although children probably prefer the jingle to which "Observer" rightly objects, most instructors are wise enough to keep to standard hymns suitable for children. As a point of interest, my own child can never remember what is sung, but always remembers the lesson.

"BANANA BENDER" (Nelson).

Sir,—As one who has taught many times the chorus "Observer" mentions may I be permitted to offer an explanation. In religious instruction, as in all types of instruction, the subject matter must be presented in a form suitable for

the listeners. Long hymns with their grown-up phraseology are not suitable. The time factor has also to be considered. The instructor's problem is to find short choruses, easily memorised, with catchy tunes, which nevertheless contain the great truths of Christianity. These are constantly being added to, using the terms of different aspects of life, also topics of current interest.

One does not speak to 1948 children in terms of bullock waggons and Eastern garments, but in terms of submarines and aeroplanes. God is also God of the industrial age, and His men are serving Him while driving bulldozers, flying planes, sitting before the microphone.

To return to the chorus. I don't know the author, but it was probably made up for children living in a railway area, whose fathers were railway workers, and who would be acquainted with the fact that all engines have letters, something the country child would overlook.

F. RANKIN (Nelson).

Sir,—I can sympathise with "Observer": hymns of one denomination can easily be misunderstood by children of another. As a very young child I went to play with the headmaster's daughter. Instead of the exploring of a strange garden and the climbing of other people's trees I was roped in to "play

More letters from listeners will be found on page 25

church." Though a little shocked at the idea of playing church I sat down while she produced a yellow hymn book and sang me hymns. "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus" didn't worry me unduly, as the tune was faintly reminiscent of hymn-tunes I knew, but when it came to "At the Cross, at the Cross" I was horrified and quite convinced that she was singing a hymn to some low obscene tune or parodying both words and tune. My horror changed to fear when I saw her father approaching. I glanced up to see the degree of wrath depicted in his face. I was rocked to see what I could only interpret as approval in his expression as he went on down the path. For years after that I was convinced that the headmaster was a secret scoffer at God, and even to-day Mephistopheles does not suggest the orthodox slim sophisticated gentleman with a diabolical smile but a bulky headmaster figure with a fatuously paternal smirk.

If hymns are regarded as an important part of religious instruction in schools, I think some severe pruning should be done before they are used in a mixed congregation.

H. or M. (Dunedin).

(We have received several other letters on this subject, but can find space for these only.—Ed.)

## "CARMEN"

Sir,—Your correspondent E. F. Kaye dismissed Bizet's *Carmen* as unworthy in a general sense and as specially unworthy of the "dignified title of Grand Opera." As for his general criticism of the opera, is he not in the teeth of the wind when he abruptly dismisses a work proclaimed by numerous composers, and most critics, as being one of the real masterpieces of the lyric stage? Tchaikovsky, in his lifelong struggle to write a really successful opera, constantly called for, but failed

to get, "a libretto like *Carmen*." He recognised it as a perfect vehicle for "Bizet's masterpiece of musico-dramatics, melody, colour and style." Again, if we are to reject *Carmen* because of a moral blot or two, we must reject the greatest operas of them all, those of Mozart.

As regards the title Grand Opera, I would point out that this infers the adding of the elements of spectacle and pageantry to the music and drama; and surely *Carmen* has these in plenty? To be sure, it doesn't attempt the bombast of a Wagner effort, but is it any less acceptable because it remains firmly among those present and strives not for the distant stars?

If the libretto captures nothing of the brooding atmosphere of Mérimée's novel, I would answer, "Praised be Meilhac and Halévy." Surely we have had enough of the soul convulsions of the exotically romantic egotists, each obsessed with his own particular brand of morbidity, who coughed and wept their flaming paths through the passionate dawning of Romanticism in the Paris of 1830-40.

J. L. KELLY  
(Kohu Kohu).

## COLOURFUL STORY

Sir,—I should like to congratulate John Buckley on his short story in a recent *Listener*. It is the story which, to date, I like best of all of those hitherto printed in your journal. It has everything—historical background, setting, scenery, love, and, above all, it symbolises that spirit which burns in the breast of every true New Zealander. I have one fault to find with the hero, however. He was not a member of the Otago Early Settlers' Association.

OTAGOPHOBE (Dunedin).

## WORLD NEWS

Sir,—There is at present a 10-hour gap between the 8.0 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. News service. In view of the world unrest I suggest that a News period be broadcast immediately following the weather broadcast at 12.30 p.m. It will take only 10 minutes.

LISTENER (Waitoa).

## GHOST-HUNTING.

Sir,—There would be no need to notice "Argosy's" second letter had it not illustrated so beautifully the truth that the dogmatism of the believer is often equalled by the dogmatism of the unbeliever. There was Harry Price devoting his life to the study of the supernatural. His body of work in this field has perhaps never been equalled for range and scientific thoroughness. He approached every problem in the proper scientific spirit—scepticism combined with a willingness to accept new truths. He called to his aid every means of check that science could supply. He found natural explanation for many phenomena, and a good deal of down-right fraud, but there were some things for which he could not account. He put the record of his investigations into books. "Argosy" has no intention of reading them. Like Mr. Podsnap, he waves them aside. "Not English!" "Not Rationalist!" "Argosy" is, of course, of the same type as the dupes of fraudulent medium. Like them, he believes what he wants to believe. His mind, like theirs, is closed.

A.M. (Wellington).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT  
"Every Man to His Trade" (Wellington):  
We agree.