

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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Democracy or Quinces?

ON the general principle that if you fire enough shots you will probably hit the target somewhere, a Dunedin correspondent opens a vigorous fusillade on us in this issue. And she certainly hits us now and again. If we have done, and in some cases done more than once, most of the things she suggests we should do, she reminds us of some things that we perhaps should have done, and have not. We have not, for example, yet become members of any of the numerous "women's organisations of this country". Perhaps we are missing a good deal of "life" by staying out. We have not attempted to label the art schools of the Dominion. Again we have perhaps been wrong. We have made no explorations into the heads and hearts of divinity students. Here, too, we have probably missed something. The heart of a divinity student in wartime must be a strange place; his head a stranger place; but it does not follow that we would be admitted to one or the other if we approached out of idle curiosity.

But our correspondent's policy may be sound if her illustrations have been chosen a little rashly. We have devoted more space to stomachs than to heads on those pages that she seems to have read most carefully. It is the old problem of the piper and the tune. We are supported largely—we do not say mainly—by women. For every woman who is interested in art or divinity or education or democracy, ten are interested in cooking. Shall we give them what they pay for, or what we think they ought to be willing to pay for? Shall we in fact assume a higher authority still—insist that the many shall be guided by the few, the dull by the clever and the thoughtless by the earnest and informed—and drag them all on improving journeys round the insides of other people's skulls? The whole history of journalism, and the much longer history of liberty, forbid such high-handedness.

Is it in fact true, in spite of her engaging manner, that our correspondent really wants to know what is going on in the New Zealand head at the present time? She knows. She is as aware as we are that what fills the heads of nine New Zealanders out of ten is not quinces or films or community centres or the fate of fiddlers, but the advance of New Zealand's enemies. So long as that advance continues *The Listener's* first task is to do what it can within the limits imposed by its purpose and name to thwart, confuse, attack, and destroy those who are driving so boldly to destroy us — heads, hearts, and stomachs, orchestras, art schools, and pantries.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible, and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

"A LONDON SYMPHONY"

Sir,—It is just as well for *The Listener* that Mr. Andersen Tyrer took responsibility for the programme notes on Vaughan Williams's "London Symphony" printed in this week's issue. They are ill-informed and deceptive. To quote the indefatigable Percy Scholes on this same Symphony: "The composer decidedly does not want us to try to relate his music phrase by phrase to any material things or happenings. 'Hearers may, if they like, localise the various movements and themes, but it is hoped that this is not a necessary part of the work.'" Scholes tells of an English conductor in New York who "took responsibility for a most detailed series of annotations which related almost every page of the work to some particular spot in London or some particular phase of London's daily life," and he says that these annotations "do not enjoy the composer's authorisation." The description applies so exactly to the notes supplied to you by Mr. Tyrer that I should say these were actually based on those annotations which the composer disallows. Or did Mr. Tyrer invent the phrase "an air of shabby gentility"?

Where is his authority for telling us in what street we are (the Strand) and at what time, and what people are around? If the chimes of Big Ben had really been meant to give us the time, why didn't

Vaughan Williams write exactly 15 minutes of music between the first chimes (in the *Lento*) and the second, three-quarter-hour (in the *Epilogue*)? Does Mr. Tyrer really believe that Vaughan Williams got that beautiful melody in the Phrygian mode (viola solo, 2nd movement) from a fiddler outside a pub? Of the third movement he writes: "One must imagine oneself sitting on a Saturday night on . . . the Embankment; that part lying between the houses of Parliament and Waterloo Bridge." In this instance he directly contravenes the composer's wishes by saying "one must" (see quotation above). Finally is there any authority for calling the "marcia" theme "The Hunger March" or did Mr. Tyrer actually hear the unemployed singing this tune? If so, how did Vaughan Williams come to write it in 1914? Or maybe there was some earlier Hunger March than the one usually referred to by that term?

I'm sorry it takes so much space to say all this, but after reading Mr. Tyrer's notes I can't help feeling that if he can so completely overlook the wishes expressed verbally by the composers he represents, it is possible that he also overlooks the things they ask for in their scores.

PHILOMATHES (Christchurch).

Mr. Andersen Tyrer has supplied us with the following reply:—

When the NBS Orchestra broadcast the first performance in New Zealand of the "London" Symphony by Vaughan Williams, on April 21, I supplied to *The Listener* the composer's own notes, in which he stated: "the title, 'A London Symphony' might run 'A Symphony by a Londoner'. That is to say, various sights and sounds of London have influenced the composer . . . but the music must succeed as music and in no other way." I also included notes on the Symphony published in the British Music Society's Bulletin when the Symphony was brought out (under the auspices of the British Music Society) in its revised version, at a concert in the Queen's Hall, London in 1920. On this occasion it was stated to be the fourth performance of the Symphony. If these notes were acceptable to a Queen's Hall audience on a fourth hearing of the work, surely we can accept them in New Zealand on a first hearing?

DEMOCRACY OR QUINCES?

Sir,—Even if the large number of Cookery Books available did not make your cooking pages somewhat superfluous, I could not help noticing in a recent issue that democracy gets barely a page, quinces two pages. The ratio seems disproportionate. Music gets a quarter of what the quinces occupy. Could you drop the tucker for a while and give us an indication of what is going on in the New Zealand head, instead of suggestions for what might go into its stomach? What is happening in the New Zealand film studios—what are its problems, its policy? Is a New Zealand documentary shaping itself? What is H. C. D. Somerset doing at the Feilding Community Centre? How much life is there in the women's organisations of this country? Not much, I guess, but can't you put your reportorial staff on to finding out why? What are the characteristics of the art schools of this country—does Auckland differ from Canterbury? If so, how much? Why can't you interview a van-driver from the country library service? How do divinity students feel about being exempted from the war? How is music being affected by the war as far as New Zealand's concerned? Are orchestras breaking up, or are the members mainly over sixty? There's a lot I'd like to know about this country. Your magazine does part of the job, but it could go further.

LESS ON THE EATS (Dunedin).

(We refer to this letter in our leader column.—Ed.)

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

ALICE L. GRUBB (Methven) and J. O. H. TRIPP (Hakataramea): The change you asked for has now been made.

POINTS FROM LETTERS

DINGY SCHRAMM (Wellington) writes denying "the horrible story" given by "Marsyas" about Strauss's "Domestic Symphony". Even in Central Europe, she says, Strauss would soon have found himself in jail if he had attempted any such method of giving his music colour.

The Target

By WHIM-WHAM.

[Following the violent German air raids on Bath, the Berlin radio described the city as "the spa of British plutocrats." It added: "These raids are hitting the right people . . . It is clear that the raids exclusively hit British plutocrats."—*Cable news item.*]

*HAVE I indeed so much misjudged
The Fuhrer's Motives, thinking that
He bombed to wreck our industries
And lay our ancient Cities flat?
Not comprehending all the Time
What he was really aiming at,
A Target worthy of his Zeal,
The hated British Plutocrat!*

*SO that is why his bomber Crews
Have flung Explosives far and wide,
From rocky Malta to Murmansk
Their ruthless Energies applied!
The Fuhrer says, You never know
Just where these Millionaires may hide—
In London's East, in Leningrad,
Who knows what Plutocrats reside?*

*YES, Hitler hates the Plutocrat
Whose wicked Wiles the World enthral.
How many Million Men must die?
How many Million Bombs must fall?
What Beauty and what Innocence
Must yet be banished past Recall,
Before he has completely spent
His anti-Plutocratic Gall?*

*OR am I wrong? And Can it be
That Conscience makes that Man afraid
To face the Facts and own the real
Intentions of the Terror-raid?
And makes him call some shattered Town
A Place where Plutocrats have played—
Just juggling Words to justify
The monstrous Havoc he has made?*