

# LISTENER

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## He Who Hesitates

WHEN it taxed our tobacco and rationed our sugar the Government added the official equivalent of "And you ain't heard nothin' yet." We hadn't. Nor have we since. But we have heard whispers and seen shadows. We have seen income-tax comparisons—then and now. We have compiled sales-tax tables in the light of our present consumption. We have placed the cost of a war that has been largely a threat against the possible cost of actual home-front fighting. We have made many other attempts to give ourselves cold shivers; and in that way just can't.

Nothing can alarm us but the thought of possible defeat; and most people now realise that defeat is possible. It is not only possible but certain if we are selfish and foolish or weak-hearted, and we at last see that clearly. So giving is not a disturbing experience. It is like tearing up a new shirt to bandage a bleeding wound. We think only of the wound, and of the possible consequences of neglect.

A certain consequence of refusing to part with our money would be parting with our liberty. We would be beaten, and being beaten in total war means being beaten. It means that thousands lose their lives, and that tens of thousands are driven from their homes; that parents lose their children as certainly as children lose their parents; that hostages are taken and used as agents of oppression; that minds are twisted to new beliefs and new allegiances, and if they are feeble never recover; that only the toughest, the hardest, the most adaptable and the least sensitive live through the night of terror and again see the dawn.

So an appeal for money for carrying on the war is not so much a request as an opportunity. It is another day offered to us for digging ourselves in. An appeal for money for the relief of the sick and the wounded is a reminder that we remain comfortable and safe because we are resting on the bodies of our own brothers and sons. An appeal for our treasures — books, pictures, and other things of the mind—means this first of all: that we have such things only because soldiers and sailors all our lives have made it possible for us to gather them together. The man who hesitates to give is hesitating to live.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## "MATTHEW PASSION"

Sir,—The commendation by "Marsyas" of the abridged version of the Bach "Matthew Passion" given annually in Christchurch Cathedral was well deserved. During the course of his article however, "Marsyas" writes of the work as "originally lasting about five hours." Speaking of an hour and a-half version he says, "This is all we can afford ourselves in New Zealand."

The "Schola Cantorum" gave the Matthew Passion complete—every note of it—with full orchestral accompaniment in the Dominion Museum early in April, 1941. The performance began at 5.30 p.m. There was an interval of one hour between seven and eight o'clock during which refreshments were served to audience and performers in the Museum Tea Rooms. The performance ended at a few minutes to ten, so that the work takes about three and a-half hours to do in its entirety. On this occasion the second part was broadcast over 2YC.

It was the intention of the "Schola Cantorum" to repeat the work this year, but the war has made such inroads on the membership of the organisation that for the time being public performances are impossible. It is quite understandable that "Marsyas" knew nothing of this performance, since the demand for seats was so great that the capacity of the hall was sold out before any advertising whatsoever was done.

STANLEY OLIVER (Wellington).

## DOUGLAS LILBURN'S "AOTEAROA"

Sir,—You state in a "Things to Come" paragraph that the overture "Aotearoa" was written for the N.Z. Centennial Matinee held in London in May, 1940. I do not dispute this, but as I was at the matinee, and thoroughly enjoyed it, I have good cause to remember the date. It was held at His Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, on April 15, 1940.

While I have pen to paper I take this opportunity of asking why items by the NBS String Orchestra are announced as played "by the strings of the NBS Orchestra"? I understand this is a string orchestra, so why not say so. Agreed that the strings make the music, but not by their own action! Or have the NBS an orchestra of animated instruments that produce music at will? "D.N.S." (Christchurch).

P.S.: for G.M.'s film reviews.

## FORTRESS TROOPS.

Sir,—When *The Listener* next publishes an article on our Fortress Troops, it is to be hoped that you may describe their life as they know it, and not as their officers or your public would have it. These eulogies of a glorious if comfortless adventure may excite the fervour of patriotic civilians; but the ex-tolled Territorial reads only mock heroics.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

March 10th. 1942

Dear Mr. Wilson,

The specially bound copy of the Xmas Number of "The New Zealand Listener" has just been received here, and I have the Queen's command to express her thanks to the Prime Minister and yourself for your thoughtfulness.

Her Majesty has read with pleasure and appreciation the terms of the article to which you call attention, and desires me to assure you how constantly the people of New Zealand are in her thoughts to-day.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Tenn

Acting Private Secretary  
to The Queen.

The Hon. D. Wilson.

A SPECIALLY-BOUND copy of the Christmas Number of "The New Zealand Listener" was sent by the Prime Minister to Her Majesty the Queen. By the courtesy of the Minister of Broadcasting, the Hon. D. Wilson, through whom the special copy was sent, we are able to give a facsimile reproduction of Her Majesty's letter of acknowledgment

Take such platitudes as: "The troops are stuck into a real job — neither easy nor comfortable — but they are doing it well." The New Zealand Territorial in a forward area leads a life that is easy judged by the amount of energy expended, and as comfortable as good food, warm clothing, and reasonably clean quarters can make it. There is little strenuous exercise, now that the first frantic period of preparations is over.

The Territorial is due for praise of a different kind. The very idea that he is "stuck into a real job" is to him irony itself. For a permanent sentry's job is no job. Many hours by night and day he spends watching the sea, restless and unhappy, almost wishing for the enemy to attack, so that he might escape from his enforced inertia. That he is indeed never off duty, and may be called out at any minute in twenty-four hours, is no consolation. Life lacks interest, he grows nervous and fretful. He will envy his comrade the transport-driver the transitory thrill of "giving her the gas." He will long for the occasional chance of

a "live practice": anything to rend the dreadful net of monotony that closes upon him.

It is difficult to be conscientiously idle, and the sentry's only legitimate hope is his few hours' leave per week. In that time he can try frantically to illuminate the void. But let him not forget that disillusionment will follow.

This is the pathetic story of the men who guard our coasts. Glory is not theirs, search for it as we may. Their life is dull, their minds atrophy. That is their sacrifice. The war of nerves is hitting them hard.

F.F.E. (Lower Hutt).

(We are glad to present another side of this picture. But which is more platitudinous: to say that our fortress troops have a disagreeable job but are doing it—which is true of 90 per cent. of them—or to say that their minds atrophy gazing at the sad sea waves—which is not true even of the other 10 per cent. as our correspondent's letter shows?—Ed.)

## WAR AND THE LAND.

Sir,—Your recent leading article suggests that the British Minister of Agriculture thinks the farmer lives for the convenience of other people. He forgets that the British Farmer was let down after the last war with boom and slump and was not wanted. Read A. G. Street's book *Farmer's Glory*. If the farmers of Britain and New Zealand adopted trade union tactics they would soon be respected by all political parties. The farmer has the power but doesn't use it.

PAUL NICKLINSON (Hunua).

## POINTS FROM LETTERS

"AUNT GERT" (Wellington) complains that the Commercial Stations are "hindering the war effort by allowing people to be persuaded to spend their money on themselves instead of putting it into war bonds and national savings."