

Danger Signals

THE ancients knew Hercules by the size of his feet: wherever they saw an especially big print in the sand or in the mud they knew who had made it. To-day we mistrust both the sand and the mud. When the stones cry out or the mud speaks we awake to the fact that something is happening. Otherwise we sleep. Something happened a week or two back in the academic world, but few of us noticed it. It was important, and it was dangerous, but we slept on. We did not realise that a heresy hunt had been started against an examiner in the University who had followed his instructions intelligently—read “the present day” as the days in which we now live, refused to convert “political and social” into military and imperial, and the Pacific ocean into the Atlantic. The questions he set, and his instructions to set them, our readers have now had before them for a week. The hunt is therefore over. But until the chase had gathered a good deal of speed we ourselves had not realised that there was anything more involved than the fact that some candidates or some teachers did not like the history paper. We know now that another attempt was being made to influence the University politically. What the examiner’s critics really meant when they charged him with asking questions outside the syllabus was that he had asked awkward questions inside the syllabus; and when they complained that he took the British Empire for granted they meant that he did not take it for granted but asked a question about the steps it has taken to adapt itself to the new world order. If the pursuit had not made all these noises it would not have been so clear as it now is that liberty is never safe anywhere—and that it is especially endangered in time of war, when feeling is so easily aroused, and there are so many opportunities for tyrants and bigots to exploit the silences that good citizens in times of crisis normally and cheerfully observe.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

QUIRES AND PLACES.

Sir,—Two years ago, I wrote to *The Listener* with a grievance about “In Quires and Places Where They Sing”. Whether propter hoc or only post hoc I do not know, but the grounds for my grievance promptly disappeared. Lately on many Sundays grounds for the same grievance have appeared again. So please let me air it. The phrase “In Quires” etc. comes from the Book of Common Prayer. The title therefore suggests English church music by choirs of men and boys. Much of the music broadcast in the session not only justifies the use of the title but is exquisite. But bad lapses often occur. For instance last Sunday the session began with a pretty waltz-like tune sung by mixed voices, accompanied by an orchestra. This curious example of church music was called “Unrequited Love”.

—R. P. TAYLOR (Kumara).

ARE MUSICIANS NORMAL?

Sir,—I cannot let pass the somewhat virulent attack made by your correspondent, J. C. Beaglehole, on an entire profession. I have known and worked with a large number of professional musicians both in New Zealand and elsewhere, finding the majority of them to be normal, kindly people, possessed of no more than their average share of the vices J. C. Beaglehole so lavishly attributes to them; perhaps more highly strung than is usual, but this is to be expected. Apparently your correspondent has been less fortunate in the ones he has met; but this does not justify such an intolerant outburst which seems to be as much out of proportion to his subject as the eruption of a volcano following a pin prick.

FRANCIS BATE (Christchurch).

HIGHER-PURCHASE

Sir,—Joy Flanagan appears to rebuke me for writing about an electric washing-machine installed in a condemned and tap-less house, in which a woman with five children was obviously struggling to exist. I agree with Mrs. Flanagan that a washing-machine is a deserved and valuable help to mothers of five children; but surely not *in the absence* of taps, tubs, benches and other non-elaborate amenities. The Woman who cradled her Child in a manger was in happier and healthier surroundings, I should think, than the woman who cradled her child in a house condemned by the authorities as unsuitable for human habitation. To make myself more plain: I think the hire-purchase system evil, and municipal control of housing insufficient when a woman can buy an electric washing-machine before she has enough clothes to wash in it, and before she is supplied with the so-called free elements of clean water and fresh air to wash and dry even those clothes that she has.

—J. E. S. (Auckland).

RELIGION ON THE AIR.

Sir,—I notice some talk as to whether religion “carries” over the air. Some say it doesn’t. But I’ve lived in the backblocks a great part of the last few years where the clergy cannot at present send officers and where one cannot get to church. In these circumstances wireless daily devotions have been the

greatest help to me. They have lifted me out of myself and out of the rut of farm kitchen work. Also my husband who is a Scots agnostic (a very hard sort of agnostic), has often been seen by me quietly listening in, particularly when the service is adorned with the hymns of long ago. All men seem to have a half-ashamed love of the hymns they were raised on.

And lots of farmhouses combine 10 a.m. tea with devotions—unintentional as far as the farmer goes, but the farmer’s wife is quite a cunning woman in fundamental things. I often wish we could have a few grand old hymns as morning songs when I’m cooking the porridge.—GIVE US MORE (Stoke).

WOMEN OR LADIES?

Sir,—Your two women correspondents have peculiar notions about the respect due to all women. I have a very dear friend who is an old lady. Am I to refer to her as an old woman? Evidently all the speakers I have heard addressing an audience have been making a mistake when they began with the familiar “Ladies and Gentlemen”.

ALL FOR “MY LADY” (Oamaru).

Sir,—I agree with “A Woman” (Auckland) and “A Woman” (Kaikoura) and think the term “lady car-cleaners” etc. a misuse, but do not let us lose what are surely two of the most beautiful words in the English language: “lady” and “gentleman”. I am not thinking of people who rely on money, property and fine clothes, but of people who display the virtues that come under the heading of “good breeding”—gentleness, courtesy, consideration for others, which the poorest person can possess. It is noticeable how many of the Maoris, especially the women, possess this inborn courtesy and gentleness. Many of us Pakehas could take a lesson from them.

—PAKEHA (Rotorua).

Sir,—I am sorry “A Woman” (Auckland) objects to the word “lady”. After telling us that a “lady, according to the Anglo-Saxon is one who kneads* or digs bread” (and what higher appellation could one wish for?) she says that the word for her “smacks too much of lavender (or moth balls), and old lace.” If that is her association it certainly is not mine, nor, I am sure, that of the majority. Perhaps if we instructed our girls a little more in the decorum that befits a lady we would not have any defaulters below the standard.

—ONE OF THEM (Hataitai).

*Should it not be kneads or gives bread?

3ZB Programmes

Owing to a misunderstanding by the Commercial Service, “The Listener” was not supplied with 3ZB programmes in time for this issue. We have been compelled, therefore, to repeat last week’s programmes, and warn our readers that these have not been fully revised. Correspondence arising out of this default should be sent direct to 3ZB, NOT to “The Listener”