

AUGUST 27, 1943

Music and Racehorses

WE print to-day a belated report of some remarks by the Polish pianist Friedman on the state of music in Australia. We print them partly because it is stimulating to see one man drawing his sword against a whole continent; and partly because it is interesting to see a man of Friedman's intelligence arguing that if a country has money for sport it has money for music. It would be as useful to argue that if a boy has a penny for an ice-cream he has one for the mission box. Of course he has if he chooses to give it and forgo the cream; but if his penny is the reward of sacrifice or effort he will earn 20 for ices before he earns one for the starving Indians. No country starves musicians because it can't afford to pay them. It starves them, or lets them starve themselves, because they do not offer it anything that it consciously and strongly wants. There is even a sense in which it is almost a sign of health when a young country refuses to set artists apart to produce or dream for them. It is rough on the artists, as it is rough on the starving Indians when small boys refuse to run errands to earn pennies for the mission box; but the boy who is more interested in good works than in good ice-cream is not exactly the kind of boy the average man would like for a son. Artists must of course live, and they will live more comfortably and more usefully if society gives them a fair deal—work to do, and a reasonable reward. It could in fact be argued that no society is civilised that does not treat them generously. But civilisation is a question of degree and music of taste, and if Australians loved music as ardently as they love racing, horse-boxes and piano-cases would come out of ships' holds together. In fact, far more pianos than horses come out, because Australians breed their own horses, but it is not quite clear that Friedman wants them to breed their own musicians. He certainly does not want them to wait until a musician arrives in the fullness of time.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

OPERA COMMENTARIES.

Sir,—It must be disheartening for a writer of Opera Commentaries to have his good work criticised, but I think the point most of the critics have tried to make has been overlooked by those who have defended the system of presenting operas. My objection is that the commentator intrudes too much. Would not a short summary before each Act be sufficient explanation to those who are not familiar with the work? To the many who know the operas it is extremely annoying to have to strain to hear a song behind the commentator's voice. In this way some of the most beautiful phrases are lost, and even when the commentator has the air to himself his too frequent interruptions shock the listener out of his enjoyment of the music.

—G.C. (Auckland).

CREEDS

Sir,—Your correspondent "Nicene" should not jump to hasty conclusions. I am quite well acquainted with the creeds (Athenasian, Nicene and Apostles), but does "Nicene" imagine that God did not exist until they were formulated?

Also, I did not say that God was imprisoned in the creeds, but that all the creeds (meaning the different denominations), contrived to imprison God in a cage (or church). It matters very little whether we call God a Force or a Person. What does matter is the effect any belief has on the lives of the people.

The spiritual guidance that is worth anything is that which teaches people to stand squarely on their feet and take the consequences of their own actions, instead of asking why God allows a hill which they themselves have created.

C.M.L. (Christchurch).

NOT ENOUGH OF US.

Sir,—*"P"* (Christchurch) grasped the point of my last letter so well that she tried to sidetrack. Her statement that after her second child arrives there shall be no more seemed the main point of her earlier letter. I would ask her has she ever done any of the farm work mentioned in my last letter. Evidently not, or she would not say a woman just out of hospital ought to be able to do it. If feeding a baby tires her, three to four hours every day tramping round hills behind horses, forking hay, and pulling swedes, even through all the rain and hail we had early in June, would almost kill her. Secondly, I would like to ask, has *"P"* ever seen a mother of ten selfish? I've always found the mothers of large families jolly good natured women, ready with sympathy and help in any one else's troubles. As one of a family of 10 with all the men folk either overseas or passed fit for overseas, I cannot agree that families of 10 would be C3. On the contrary, the one or two pampered children in a small family are generally the ailing ones.

It would have been a poor look-out for *"P."* and everyone else in the British Empire if all the women had said years ago "After my second child arrives there shall not be any more."

ONE OF MANY (Putaruru).

Sir,—*"Putaruru,"* because she has the maternal instinct and also apparently the physical strength of two or three normal women, is very intolerant towards her less fortunate sisters. What a

paradise this world would be for war-mongers and money-bugs if all women were like *"Putaruru,"* for large populations encourage exploitation which ultimately ends in war or revolution. To me life means much more than a purely animal-like existence of eating, breeding, sleeping and housework. If women really desire a world sufficiently decent to bring children into they must demand more creches, kindergarten schools, and home-helps, which will give them time to make their influence felt on committees, councils, and conferences dealing with poverty, disease, war and world-peace, all of which affect women and children much more than they do men. If we leave this world's affairs in the men's hands, we will deserve a repetition of hell without end for ourselves and our children. It lies in our hands. We must not, *"Putaruru,"* leave it all to God.—E.Y. (Patorua).

GIVE US THE BEST

Sir,—It is clear from the letters appearing in your paper that a considerable section of radio listeners are seriously dissatisfied with the programmes presented to them. Why not the best in every class of entertainment? There is plenty of it. We want more light orchestras, military bands, Gilbert and Sullivan, good dance music and humour of the delightful "Knitting." "Ole in the Road," and "Maud" type of thing.

One recent correspondent was emphatic: "If programmes put over by some stations neglect public opinion, then God help us." I fully agree with him, but believe that there are thousands of people in New Zealand who share his disgust, and are hungry for what E. G. Wade describes as "the glorious, inspired music of the old masters." Possibly these people are in a minority, but E. de Lacey opportunely reminds us that "even a minority has a right to consideration."

It is sad that the good music we have is often wasted because of some factor in its presentation: for instance, the mid-afternoon classical hour which so few people are free to hear, and the ruination of the Sunday night opera by the interpolation of a confidential voice describing the plot! G.C. says that he is "too irritated by the commentary ever to be able to hear one right through," and he would like to hear other listeners' views. I can say that we have quite given up the unequal contest, although really enthusiastic lovers of opera music.

It has been left to "Cornstalk" to make an excellent suggestion. "Surely there are enough music lovers in New Zealand to organise a campaign for better music and less rubbish from the main stations." Indeed there are. Cannot we take up this constructive suggestion and do something with it?—N. M. HUNTER-BROWN (Nelson).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"Old Bandman" (Napier), says in reply to *"Hans Bach"* that it is not a question of favouring one noise against another. He "condemns all noises."

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

H.G. (Blackwater).—No information but that broadcast by gentleman himself. *"Magacycle"* (Christchurch).—You are confusing size of page with size of issue. We wish you were right.

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