

## At School and After

**W**ITH health and a little luck most boys and girls come through secondary school without injury. Most succeed also in escaping knowledge. If we except those with special interests and special powers—a few in languages, a few more in mathematics or in science—there is not much in their heads when they leave that was not there when they started. They have grown older of course by three, four, or five years. They have learnt from life and from one another. But if you meet them again ten or even five years later it is exceptional to find one still burdened by the knowledge he acquired in the classroom: unless he has had it replanted at a university. We have raised the school age in New Zealand, and shall raise it further: but as Dr. J. H. Murdoch points out in a shrewd and sensible survey of the High School system sent to us last week for review, "there arises this queer result":

"When few primary pupils were destined to attend high schools, all the primary effort was concentrated on fundamental operations, laying foundations for a house that would probably never be built; now, when most pupils will attend some form of post-primary school, the basic work is neglected."

Nature fortunately adjusts the balance by shaking off the superstructure before it becomes a menace. If our boys and girls pass out of their teens without much knowledge, they also pass out without much conceit. There are not many "smart Alocs" among them, hardly any "arty" people, and no snobs; though Dr. Murdoch has discovered something in our boarding schools that could develop into snobbery if our social climate were not so unfavourable. His real criticism of our secondary schools is, however, that they do not draw a sharp enough distinction between worthy and unworthy living. Though he nowhere says so explicitly, he is troubled by the thought that our schools are "failing to stress the inwardness of life" and therefore building on sand. Big, therefore, though this book is, parents as well as teachers should try to read it.

THE HIGH SCHOOLS OF NEW ZEALAND: A CRITICAL SURVEY. By J. H. Murdoch. N.Z. Council for Educational Research. Printed by Whitcombe & Tombs.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## ONE A MINUTE

Sir,—“Simple Simon” has certainly lived up to his name in his article on “Sowing By the Moon.” Although his pen-name assumes an unsophisticated mind, he is really one of those conceited people who think they know everything, whereas the sum of their knowledge could be written on a postage stamp, and what they do not know would fill several large libraries. To prove the matter, can “Simple Simon” explain and define four (among many) things, viz. electricity, the force of gravitation, X-rays, wireless rays? If he can’t (and not even a physicist can), why are we compelled to listen to him when he exhibits his ignorance of the rays which come from the planets and heavenly bodies by the medium of the moon, and govern all life on the earth? If “Simple Simon” can not define any one of these forces, how does he know what forces emanate from the planets, but I refrain from casting my pearls before swine, or ignorant people. For the benefit of your readers who are not so steeped in ignorant prejudice as “Simple Simon,” I might say that two days before full and new moons is not the best time to sow seeds, as at those times the moon may be either barren or fertile. The best dates can be obtained from me or from the Compost Club Magazine.

H. E. LAWRENCE (Stratford).

Sir,—With reference to the final paragraph of “Simple Simon’s” article in *The Listener*, I imagine that he would claim that, being “simple” (i.e., mentally deficient), he is not responsible for the sense of his writings. But I feel that your readers are entitled to some knowledge of the subject presented to them by the writer. If “Simple Simon” would study simple geography, he would find that in Palestine there is a well known geographical feature called by geographers “the Rift.” This is a valley running from Mount Hermon in Syria to the Gulf of Akaba and the Red Sea. The River Jordan runs down this valley as far as the Dead Sea, at which point

it is 1200 feet below sea level. Between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba the plain is nowhere more than 200 feet, and usually considerably less, above sea level.

I am not concerned to justify the “Word of Jehovah” in Ezekiel 47. He will make good His Word and His promises in His own time. I would merely point out that earthquakes are by no means infrequent in those parts, and have done stranger things than raise the earth’s surface a few feet, enabling sea or river water to run where it did not before.—K. E. WRIGHT (Nelson).

## MALE AND FEMALE.

Sir,—Your correspondent, D. Scott, presents us with a rather new point of view in her letter “Male and Female.” Many, if not most of the world’s masterpieces of sculpture are of the unclad male and female form, but there is nothing crude or vulgar about them. They are genuine works of art, so why not have the same to-day in the modern equivalent of sculpture—the photograph? Did those ancient artists rely solely upon their imaginations for inspiration? I hardly think so. Have your nude photographs by all means, only let them be things of beauty and forbid the lewd poses of the film magazine which are calculated to appeal to the baser instincts. These need no encouragement; the films and the film magazines have done enough damage already to a grievously lowered moral code and it is high time something were done to raise their standard very considerably. A thing of beauty lives for ever, so why not artistic photographs of the human body and cut out all the foul misrepresentations? AGRICOLA (Marton).

## CHURCH ORGANISTS.

Sir,—Mr. Withers’ contention that the organist has something to say as well as the minister should have more generous recognition—provided that he has something to say (or play) worth listening to. The concluding Voluntary should be regarded as part of a church service, and no doubt a conscientious organist spends as much time in preparing a suitable selection as the minister on the study of his sermon; but, whereas it would be considered “tough” on the latter if the broadcast closed down and the congregation “walked out on him,” yet this is the lot of the long-suffering organist, whose music is obliged to “waste its sweetness on the desert-ed” air.

Regarding organ recitals, the general public would be definitely not interested unless the performer was prepared to submit certain “classics” (as for example “My Baby Just Care for Me,” “The Sailor With the Navy Blue Eyes,” etc., etc.). PEDALS (Lower Hutt).

Sir,—Why are not organists in their places and rendering music when the announcer informs the public that the relay is going over to such and such a church? Instead of music we hear the shuffling of feet, the sneezing and coughing before the organ starts. And why do organists, after rendering the sweet music of the hymns and the vespers, pull out all the stops, use all the pedals, and make such a volume of noise that it seems as if it were “the devil in the Kirk” let loose before the church goes off the air.

—SOFT PEDAL (Devonport).

## TO OUR READERS

We thank you once more—especially those of you who, even when you send letters of criticism or complaint, so often add that you enjoy reading “The Listener.” We shall try to interest you again throughout 1944.

## A Suggestion

Meanwhile, your appreciation suggests this to us—that if you like “The Listener,” your friends will like it too, and will be happy to accept it from you as your gift to them this Christmas. Try it out. Give them a prepaid subscription to “The Listener” for three, six or twelve months.

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