

YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

Sir,—While noting that J.R.A. only suggests that in New Zealand educational standards are being lowered, I would like to dispute his stand most emphatically. The content of education has altered to exclude some subjects and simplify others, making the curriculum more closely related to children's interests. Within the changed content I would say unhesitatingly that the standard has been raised considerably, particularly in art and music where specialist teaching is available to all schools. And yet I am forced to agree with J.R.A., the Universities, the Chamber of Commerce and so forth that some very substandard products seem to find their way on to the intellectual market. But there are other statistics to study.

Only one quarter, roughly, of any population is above average intelligence and of that only a few show outstanding ability in any field. Today, not only that quarter but most of the average group have access to our Universities and to positions which before for many and various reasons, from economic to social, went mostly to the very able. It is the emergence of this average section which gives the appearance of lowered educational standards. Study, I am certain, would show that their standards even in overcrowded schools and Universities have, in fact, risen, but they still bear no comparison to the really able of either twenty or thirty years ago or today.

J.R.A. and others who continually compare the moderns in art and music unfavourably with the classics should recall something of the environment of both groups. Mechanisation has had just as obvious an effect on the arts as on any other aspect of our life. Escape into literature, art and music of the lighter, more easily assimilable variety is partly the outcome of a more unsettled society, partly the result of the emergence of the lower class market as its educational standards have risen. The more obscure forms of art, music and literature are, I suggest, a reflection of the obscurity of our future. Lastly, genius in the arts, as in anything else, is sparsely scattered through the ages. A Bach, a Shakespeare, an Einstein are rare indeed.

MARIE RAE (Christchurch).

THE HYDROGEN BOMB

Sir,—Discussing the above and Communism, Mr. Dick Southon ends his letter by suggesting that peace might come between Communist East and the West, and that "this job starts from the proposition that they have what we need." He has something to say about dialectic and dialectical growth, but I think he must have his own meanings for these terms. Dialectic means the art of discussion by means of question and answer, and of evolving truths by logical discussion. Is this what Communism has and we have not? I doubt it.

Quite recently we have had Mr. Khrushchov denouncing Stalin and his thirty-year regime of massacre, torture and terror. Massacre, torture and terror are not logical ways of evolving truth. Mr. Southon deplores the circumstance that "we accept as precious the religious attitude which believes wholeheartedly and unquestionably." Soviet Russians have exhibited just this religious attitude to Stalin and all his works for many years, and still believe "wholeheartedly and unquestionably" in the infallibility of Communist Party doctrine.

So far as I can judge, the Kremlin men and the Soviet Russians have

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nothing that we need to help us co-operate sincerely for world peace and the outlawing of atomic and hydrogen bombs. The Western dialectic, whatever its failings or faults may be, is more likely to evolve truth and to arrive at what will provide sure foundations for peace than the Russian dialectic which demands first of all unquestioning acceptance of Communist Party doctrine as infallible.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

HAYDN'S TOY SYMPHONY

Sir,—Your correspondent Phyllis M. Short rightly states that "we should allow ourselves to laugh at a symphony concert as elsewhere, wherever we meet humour." But she, too, has missed the point. Like many others who have written in, she seems to think that Haydn's Toy Symphony is a masterpiece which can stand on its own feet as a fine, though humorous, work of art, whereas in truth it is nothing of the sort. Let us be under no illusions: this so-called "symphony" is practically worthless musically. Haydn himself wrote 104 real symphonies, most of which are incomparably better (I should recommend some of your correspondents to try to hear some of these sometime). No "serious music lover" with a speck of musical experience and a glimmer of critical sense would give a brass farthing for the Toy Symphony as music—in fact, it would be difficult to think of any "classical" work more trivial and uninteresting.

What, then, is the reason for the popularity of the piece? Simply, that it is a musical frolic, a relaxation, something ridiculous and laughable. Goodness knows what your correspondent means by a "true" performance of the Toy Symphony—I fancy it would be one where the audience sits "solemn, earnest and owl-like," as she puts it. But whether the piece is played well or badly matters not the least, so long as everybody enjoys the fun, and I should be inclined to the view that, judged in this light, the performances of the Toy Symphony were a great success.

J.R.B. (Wellington).

Sir,—This account of a concert which took place at Queen's Hall in 1918 may be of interest to some of your readers. I am quoting from Percy Young's work on Elgar:

"This was a sensational affair in which George Robey 'conducted' (with great effort) the Pizzicato from Delibes's *Sylvia*, and in which the orchestra, containing Elgar as cymbalist, Irene Scharer, Myra Hess and Muriel Foster as nightingales, Albani, Ada Crossley and Carrie Tubb as cuckoos, Moiseiwitsch as triangle player, and Mark Hambourg with castanets, played Richard Blagrove's Toy Symphony. Elgar, growing tired of cymballing, made his way to the first fiddles and seizing Max Mossel's instrument, gave an impromptu cadenza."

A.C.F. (Wanganui).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

UBIQUITOUS LADY

Sir,—O Editor, Father Editor, hearken ere we die! How much longer are our shrinking ears to be assailed by the strains of that fading lady, Rose Marie? Station 2YA is the worst offender. In a spirit of last-fling desperation she comes, in musical comedy selections (invariably), in orchestral interludes, in recitals by bass-baritones and, spasmodically, before and after the weather fore-

cast, the news and the National Anthem. And does this content our programme arrangers? Perish the thought! With a falseness that out-Burgesses MacLean they then regale us with a rendering by a Western gentleman who transforms the poor girl's last vestiges of tunelessness into the whistle of an oncoming train.

Couldn't we have the Pavane for a Dead Princess instead?

ONE WHO PREFERS RUE (Marton).

NZBS PLAYS

Sir,—I agree with A.H.R. that the quality of the NZBS plays has improved over the last few years. This proves that New Zealand has the actors, but my complaint is that they are not used to best advantage. For instance, the play *Rebecca* is, as everyone knows, good radio drama; but at times in the recent production it developed into high comedy with the entrance of the butler. Why doesn't the producer keep this well-known Cockney voice for parts which are suitable? Surely amongst that large body known as "others taking part" there must be someone who wouldn't have spoken such words as "Shall I sherve dinner now, Shir?" This miscasting is quite noticeable in plays produced in the Wellington studios. This is a great pity, for if better use was made of the material at hand, NZBS productions could compare favourably with the BBC.

A. JOHNSTONE (Wellington).

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Sir,—Charges of slowness have been levelled at some Government departments. Surely this does not apply to our Broadcasting Service. After a recent heavy storm in the district, with road and telephone service disrupted, I had occasion to cancel a meeting. I contacted 1YZ and the cancellation was carefully noted. I hung up the receiver and returned to the dinner-table to find the notice already on the air, with the family listening goggle-eyed at such celerity, and muttering delightedly, "This beats American hustle to a frazzle. Robin Winks (*These New Zealanders*) should have been here."

I wish to thank 1YZ for speed and courtesy.

JEAN GOODYEAR (Katikati).

MUSICAL CRITICISM

Sir,—In your issue of April 13 there was a criticism by "Sebastian" of the performance of *St. Matthew Passion* by the Royal Christchurch Musical Society. "Sebastian" refers to the soprano solos being sung by Marjorie Rowley, as stated in *The Listener* of that week, but they were in fact taken by Dora Drake, as Marjorie Rowley was temporarily

AUSTRALIANS IN ENGLAND

THE first NZBS broadcast of play by the touring Australian cricketers in Great Britain will be a "scoreboard" with details of play in the one-day match against the Duke of Norfolk's XI on April 28. The broadcast will be heard at 7.18 a.m. on April 29 (Sunday), and repeated at 8.10 a.m.

During the following week the Australians will play Worcester, and scoreboards and details of play for the three days of the match will be broadcast here on April 3, 4, 5, at the times mentioned above.

indisposed. Dora Drake's name was read out several times by the announcer, before, during and after the concert, but evidently "Sebastian" did not listen very attentively to the broadcast. He was also unable to identify the "two basses." This was due to a slight error in *The Listener* in calling both men basses, and its programme should have read: "Winston Sharp, baritone, and Gordon Griffiths, bass," as did the Society's programme. Would it not be possible to have more accurate listening and reporting of musical events such as this? ACCURACY, PLEASE! (Christchurch).

THE GOON SHOW

Sir,—They say "one man's meat is another man's poison"—and it's evidently true of radio sessions. We can enjoy clean jokes and laughter with the best, but somehow the inanities of the *Goon Show* leave us stone cold; so when you are checking up on the popularity of this session please count me out. There's more than enough of this sort of cheap humour every day of the week, and several agree with us that the radio is far more silent in the house these days in consequence.

S-OON G-HOW (Katikati).

THE SPRINGBOK SEASON

Sir,—For some weeks now Messrs. McCarthy, Boggs and others, on the air, have been urging, cajoling, browbeating us all to get behind our national selectors and players in a determined, loyal and united effort to beat the Springboks. To me, as a Kiwi born and bred, this a most laudable attitude, were it not for the haunting belief that the game is greater than the players (and, of course, immeasurably more important than the watchers or even the august administrators).

As all my reading and research convinces me that the South Africans are infinitely more thorough and honest than we in their approach to the great game, and accordingly produce more able and dedicated teams, I must, perhaps reluctantly, support them. Are any of your readers faced with this dilemma?

F.B. (Auckland).

WORLD OF SPORT

Sir,—It was with great pleasure that I listened to Mr. Ingram's *World of Sport*, broadcast from 2ZB on April 8. As a St. John Ambulance member I found it delightful to hear him praising the work we do. It is only too true that our thanks are few and far between, but we always work willingly and endeavour to help those in need, however little we are appreciated.

AILSA WARBURTON (Picton).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

C.T. (Wellington): One person may not take part in a correspondence under two names.

Fossicker (New Plymouth): No; simply a variation of the programme title, and not without allusive meaning for those who listen to hit parades.

Kiwi (Dunedin): Thank you for suggestions; but it is not good practice to delay news, nor to substitute the less important for the more important.

E.I. (Christchurch): Certainly, but it is impossible yet to say when.

B.I. (Tirangi): Also, 1YD is on the air two hours earlier than 2YD. These differences arose as broadcasting developed in different regions, and it has not been necessary to smooth them out. Many thanks for appreciative comment.