

EMPIRE GAMES

Sir,—I would like to tender a very sincere vote of thanks—in which I am sure many thousands will join me—for the very excellent commentaries given on the Empire Games. The descriptions were most vivid and one felt that one was actually there without any of the discomforts of queuing up, and hot or wet weather. Also to the inexpert like myself one followed and understood far more than one could if actually there; I would like the commentators to know how much their services were appreciated.

C. RUSSELL (Auckland).

Sir,—As one of the many who were unable to attend the Empire Games, may I through your journal express appreciation of the broadcasts throughout this week. May I thank Messrs. McCarthy and King, and Mr. Forbes Carlile, for their bright, interesting commentaries and very able descriptions. There has not been a dull moment during their broadcasts. I am sure many listeners will agree with me, and perhaps the commentators themselves will be glad to know that their efforts are gratefully acknowledged.

"LISTENER" (Hamilton).

Sir,—I would like just a small space to thank most kindly your two announcers Winston McCarthy and Joe King who gave us country folk such a complete, as well as humorous, running commentary on the Empire Games. I had the radio going night and day, and thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. I guess these two men need a few weeks' rest from "talking" after such a strenuous week.

M. MARSH (Rawene).

Sir,—I would like to express our sincere and enthusiastic appreciation of the wonderful work of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service in connection with the Games. Through the expert co-operation of the many people concerned, the voices of Winston McCarthy, Joe King and Forbes Carlile, the three most outstanding personalities, came to us in our distant farm home and gave us a most marvellous picture of the Games. They gave us the canvas painted with the sure and expert strokes of artists, and peopled it with living people who moved in front of us as in a living picture. We were thrilled with every minute of the broadcasts from the moment the curtain rose and the crowded amphitheatre of Eden Park was described for us till the dark and emptying arena faded from our sight on the night of February 11. Indeed, those three were companions whose company we could not have enjoyed had we been one of the thousands actually in Eden Park, at the Olympic Pool, at Karapiro or at Western Springs. As it was, we were able to dodge from one place to the other, as on a magic carpet, and the expert knowledge of our commentators added to our pleasure all the time. I am sure they must be in world class as far as broadcasting of this kind is concerned. Their conversation to each other as the commentary proceeded added, not only to our fun and enjoyment, but was most informative to the lay mind. I feel I want to congratulate these men on their work, which at times must have been exhausting, and yet no inkling of

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

this was allowed to interfere with the tempo of their broadcasts. Well done and many thanks.

J.H.S. (Apiti).

Sir,—I have in the past read in your columns letters on the methods of New Zealand sports commentators, but surely in the six-mile race at the 1950 Empire Games they reached an all-time low ebb on what should have been one of the highlights in sporting broadcasts.

Now, if listeners were told that Smith of Trinidad, a competitor in the three-mile race, was dark skinned with a mop of blonde, curly hair, that he was thin but over six feet, and ran with a long, loping stride, that he was running with his arm in a sling, that five years ago he had run the distance in 12 minutes dead, but that his best time last year was 18 minutes, and that half-way through the race he took his arm from his sling and threw the sling away, then the race could be seen by those gathered round the radios. You see what I mean.

But not a bit of it. We know how we get our football matches and racing. For the 20 minutes of the six-mile race two commentators undertook in relays to make each lap seem like the last by an endless torrent of words consisting of names and distances in yards between runners. Sorry—we were told that one runner had a snowy head; and this is practically my sole mental picture of the afternoon's meeting. During the race a series of competitors in the high jump, each no doubt with his particular style, were merely "having their jump." We heard plenty of what was going on, but never once did we "see" a thing.

For the swimming in the evening the addition of an informed commentator made all the difference and kept me up until nearly midnight. It seems rather more than just a pity that such an occasion was allowed to go off under these conditions. The wrestling is perhaps better not mentioned. Is it the fault of the Broadcasting officials or the Empire Games Committee, or are the announcers in league with the photographers to force the people to go and see the pictures?

J. HEALY (Rotorua).

POLYGENESIS

Sir,—I was pained to see that in the recent *Listener* interview with Ngaire Thomson you referred to Pollyanna as "another L. M. Montgomery brain-child." As every schoolgirl knows it was Miss Eleanor Porter who mothered that priggish product of a pen dipped in corn-syrup. To wish her on to L. M. Montgomery is as unwarranted as saddling Dickens with little Lord Fauntleroy as well as Little Nell.

M. BULLOCK (Wellington).

Sir,—May I draw to your attention an error in the article on Miss Ngaire Thomson in your issue of February 10? You state that "Pollyanna" is an L. M. Montgomery brain-child; this, however, is not so. The "Pollyanna" stories were written by three successive authors—Eleanor H. Porter, Harriet Lummis Smith, and Elizabeth Barton.

ELIZABETH D. NEWCOMBE
(Kaipara Flats).

VAIN THINGS

Sir,—I am perturbed at the growing use of two phrases. One is "a good thing," the other is "a bad thing." On Monday night, February 13, from 2YA Well-

ington, at 8.20, when a team of conversationalists appeared in *Let's Talk It Over*, these phrases occurred, it seemed to me, several times.

I would like to enter a plea for the exclusion of these expressions. They are A Bad Thing.

L.W.E. (New Plymouth).

(This usage has been growing for a long time—since the Roman Conquest, according to those indefatigable antiquarians, Sellar and Yeatman.—Ed.)

THE YOUNG IN ART

Sir,—In "Poet's Progress Report" Mr. Cresswell is reported as describing Andrew Young as "The most promising young English poet." But is not Mr. Young an elderly Anglican clergyman who regards his career both as poet and priest as almost ended?

"X.Y.Z." (Christchurch).

(The epithet was misplaced. Andrew Young is 65, Edith Sitwell 63, T. S. Eliot 62, Mr. Cresswell only 54; the poems mentioned were published in 1945 and 1947.—Ed.)

HOW THINGS BEGAN

Sir,—The discussion evoked by Father Duggan's book would be clarified if he would define his position with regard to the following propositions, now accepted by the vast majority of scientists all over the world: (1) The age of the earth is at least 2000 million years, and probably much more. (2) Life has existed on the earth for many hundreds of millions of years, as is demonstrated by the geological records of the fossil-bearing strata. (3) In those strata the complexity of life-forms increases steadily from the lowest or oldest strata to the highest or most recent.

These propositions are the basis of all teaching in geology and biology in the great universities of the world, and the last is the completely unshaken basis of the theory of evolution, regarded by all great authorities as amply demonstrated. These three propositions are constantly obscured or denied by anti-evolutionists of the fundamentalist type, but no scientist of repute would waste his time by discussing evolution with anyone who refused to accept them. Where does Father Duggan stand with regard to them?

The immense significance of proposition (3) should be carefully noted by those unfamiliar with the facts. The highest, i.e., the most recent, strata show abundant remains of the higher vertebrates and primates; but there are no higher mammals in the chalk strata or below them; there are no mammals, reptiles or birds below the coal-bearing strata; no vertebrates at all in the lower strata. With regard to Father Duggan's demands for "transitional forms," the whole process of geological and palaeontological research during the last 90 years has demonstrated thousands of transitional forms from the earliest ages to the present. So far from being a "riddle," the "record of the rocks" shows a clear and coherent picture of the development of life on this planet. I challenge Father Duggan to deny that all the great authorities of the world in geology, palaeontology and biology are perfectly convinced of the truth of evolution, and see no reason whatever to invoke the help of creative acts at widely different periods of the earth's long history. The expedient is indeed remarkably naive. Father Duggan has strangely

ignored the Law of Parsimony, often called "Occam's razor"—"Causes are not to be multiplied unnecessarily."

READER (Henderson).

Sir,—On reading Mr. Prior's letter in your issue of January 27 I find that I have abandoned the natural sciences, and if Mr. Prior has in mind (and this I doubt) the pseudo-physics or pseudo-scientific premonitions and prophecies of some scientists I cheerfully agree. However, as it is not my wish to deny reality, and as it is reality that the true scientist deals with, I must hasten to assure him that I am not a disciple of Emanuel Kant and steeped in the inanities of subjectivism. Perhaps I should have made myself clear that in asserting that evolution is not proved because it argues from the particular to the general I had in view the assumption that we were approaching the theory of evolution from the aspect of its ability to explain ultimate causes. It is the fundamental questions that philosophy seeks to answer such as life and being, space and time, change and stability; all these have faced philosophers since Thales first thought in terms of a rational explanation of the world.

Now it is not within the domain of the natural sciences to explain these ultimate realities. These sciences deal with observable facts and phenomena and propose to explain the proximate causes of things. On the other hand it is for philosophy to explain the ultimate causes. If, therefore, evolutionists wish to enter into the realm of philosophical certitudes, they are not at liberty to hold that if the natural sciences offer confirmation of their theory then a satisfactory explanation of ultimate causes automatically follows. No—they must first establish the validity of evolution as a philosophical science capable of explaining ultimate causes, and only then can they proffer the accidental proofs that the natural sciences may supply in secondary confirmation. It is in this sense, therefore, that I hold that it is not valid to argue from the particular to the general. Mr. Prior admits that the generalisations arrived at by the natural sciences are liable to correction, and as the theory of evolution is based on these generalisations it also stands before the bar of research. Surely he himself has abandoned the natural sciences to the imaginings of the pseudo-scientists if he seeks to force an explanation of ultimate causes from scientific generalisations.

Mr. Prior then supplies one instance of an organism which he says biologists cannot agree as to the phylum into which it should be placed. I asked for many such instances, but even if there are 10, such a number would be insignificant compared with the many thousands which can with certainty be associated with their respective phyla. Is it not more reasonable to regard any doubtful cases which may exist from the viewpoint of the inability of biologists to recognise or ascertain the correct facts concerning a particular organism than to assume that the organism itself is in a transitional process of doubt and hence evolving from one group into another? Finally, is not this the main point at issue? I trust then that Peripatus can be left in peace.

A.A.N. (Wellington).