

## FACTUAL AND CREATIVE WRITING

Sir,—This letter should really be sent to whomever compèred *Book Shop* (2YA, November 30).

I enjoyed the Christmas edition, Part One. M. K. Joseph's selection of current prose literature—I hope I am not biased by his choice of my novel among those for mention—I thought outstandingly good. A. D. Priestley handled other prose with more care than most of it deserved.

But I particularly enjoyed the irony of the commentator's footnote. It is a peculiarity of some New Zealanders who have moved into reviewing, "literary criticism," etc., to prefer the ostensibly factual to the creative, to exclaim over golfers' memoirs and books with titles such as *Penguin Rearing in the Cocos Islands* (factual stuff, you know—statistics enclosed) and *My Aunt Matilda's Love Life in Turkestan*. I don't know at what point in this century the compère of *Book Shop* began to watch novelists earn their temporary fame only to fade into oblivion. I think, however, that I could name three or four novelists active in any decade of the 20th Century whose works will survive long after writers of "adventure, games and travel" have lost their ephemeral market. Perhaps I am wrong, but it seems to me that Joyce Carey's *Mister Johnson* has greater possibilities of enduring than Pauline Betz's (have I the name correctly?) tennis reminiscences.

My apologies. I have become serious. And I agreed to regard the compère's footnote, in which he expressed his preference for books about tennis, golf and all that, as an ironical gesture directed at the uninitiated or illiterate. My congratulations to him.

GUTHRIE WILSON  
(Palmerston North).

## CHURCH BROADCASTS

Sir,—*"C.W.F."* portrays a most narrow, unsound, and immature conception of church broadcasts. In their deepest convictions the large majority of listeners are most decidedly unorthodox. Competent estimates are that only ten per cent are churchgoers. This majority has lost interest in the orthodox religions because science and common sense have shown many of their theories to be false.

In the Unitarian Church all belief must stand the test of enlightened reason. There is nothing "cold" about a religion which is built securely upon that which is true and good in all cultures and in every area of progressive thought. Unitarian Church broadcasts would fulfil the best ideals of broadcasting—the greatest good to the greatest number.

A. T. SMITH (Whangarei).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

## ENGLISH CHURCH MUSIC

Sir,—With your permission I should like to amplify Mr. Tucker's comments (*Listener*, November 23). The 18th Century anthem alluded to ("I Have Surely Built Thee an House") was sung at the Christchurch Cathedral Dedication Service on November 1, 1881, and at Dedication Anniversary Festivals subsequently. In recent years, however, it has been displaced by a particularly fine, although rather florid, anthem composed by Dr. Bairstow. Of similar interest is the Vaughan Williams Coronation *Te Deum*, broadcast recently by 3YC. This work was rehearsed by the Christchurch Cathedral Choir in 1938, when the late Maugham Barnett was Choirmaster. It

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

was his last effort at the organ at a Friday afternoon practice. He died on the following Sunday. It is of interest to recall a BBC Home News item (October 4) that a speaker at a Church Council meeting had criticised modern Cathedral music as tending to be theatrical. I could well imagine that the complainant regrets the abandonment of many compositions of the controversial 1860-1900 period, and possibly is unable to grasp the significance of the Tudor revival.

W. H. WARREN (Christchurch).

## THE NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sir,—The fact that the National Orchestra did not attract full houses in Auckland should not occasion undue surprise. Such an experience is not peculiar to New Zealand. It was the end of an unusually packed year of music, the excellent programmes may have lacked the diversity that beckons crowds, students were preparing for examinations, and many people husbanding resources against the cost of holidays. Our genuine music-lovers are on the increase and will some day number sufficient to fill our concert halls.

Occasionally a more popular programme (which I do not advocate) and a strong dose of press propaganda help to swell the house to capacity, but these additional customers attend largely out of curiosity and because everybody's doing it, not for the intrinsic value of the music. As Honegger has written, "People no longer listen to music, they go to watch the performance of a famous conductor or pianist." Stravinsky and Vaughan Williams have also written pertinently on this subject. It is comforting, therefore, to read that certain performances of our orchestra, judged in the calm atmosphere of recorded music, have recently elicited the warmest praise from distinguished musicians in England. My point is that it was both absurd and unjust of a press critic to have attributed the poor audiences in Auckland solely to the shortcomings of the orchestra and its conductor. Booking for the Auckland concerts was poorer than in several provincial towns. Is it reasonable to attempt to account for this by imagining the Auckland public saying in advance, "We are not booking this time because we know the orchestra is going to play badly?"

J.C.T. (Auckland).

## TO A JET PILOT

Sir,—There was once a caterpillar who chewed his way very logically across the surface of a cabbage leaf. The three-dimensional flight of a butterfly was beyond the range of his understanding; and when in the course of his methodical munching he came across a butterfly's egg he disliked it because it was not cabbage. To him it was just a silly thing that the silly thing had left there. But need he, even abridged, have taken 71 lines to say so?

D.S. (Auckland).

## DECLINING FESTIVAL

Sir,—I read, with interest, a letter written by "N.Z. Scot" in reference to the Scots' custom of holding "Hogmanay." He is correct in stating it has no reference to money. I lived in Dundee for eleven years and we used to celebrate this very old custom every New Year's Eve from midnight till the early hours of the morning, starting off

with a big fireworks display and every home had its front and back door wide open to welcome anyone who liked to call. Each house provided a marvellous supper, also kegs of draught beer for the younger men, whisky for the older generation, haggis, sandwiches, oat cakes, etc., and the young people would sing and dance and it was really to forget old injuries, imaginary or real, and start afresh the new year which finished up with a big regatta in the harbour. It is a big regret to me that these Hogmanays are passing into the mists of time as they were wonderful shows, with lavish hospitality. The coming generation will never see the like now.

AULD LANG SYNE (Wellington).

Sir,—May I add my word to the story of Hogmanay? During the early 1900's I was a small girl in Edinburgh, and it was the custom in our family for my brother and myself to present ourselves at the front door just on the stroke of midnight on the last night of the year. We shouted out the old rhyme quoted in your article and hammered on the door. After a certain amount of byplay, when Father pretended to think we were beggars, Mother would take us in and give us "Currant Bun" (a Scots cake associated with New Year), and a drink of some sort of cordial to "hansel" the New Year. This was an old custom and appeared to be confined to members of the family and not first-footers. Hogmanay is actually New Year's Eve, that day is always called Hogmanay in Scotland. Hansel is a word connected with good luck and is used in many ways. A gift of a purse, for instance, usually has a small coin to "hansel" the purse—bring luck. I was delighted to see the old rhyme in print, it was like meeting an old friend.

A SCOT (Auckland).

Sir,—A letter from "New Zealand Scot" gives the derivation of the word "Hogmanay" as from the Latin in *hoc anno*. For years I have lived under the misconception that the word derived from the French *Au gui menez*—"Lead to the mistletoe," a cry used by the boys and girls of France when out on their guising expeditions on the last day of the year.

Since many Scottish words and customs can be traced to the old French through Scotland's alliance with France, I accepted this as the most probable origin of the name.

A SCOTTISH SCOT (Christchurch).

## THE THAMES TUNNEL

Sir,—The first tunnel under the Thames was built by Marc Isambard Brunel, a civil engineer famed also for the introduction of mass production methods at Chatham Dockyard. The Thames Tunnel was not a railway tunnel.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was the son of Marc Isambard Brunel, and is the engineer referred to by "A Student of Railways." He was responsible for the adoption of the broad gauge by the Great Western Railway, and was the designer of the ill-fated steamship *Great Eastern*.

J. W. SUTHERLAND (Thames).

Sir,—Your correspondent "A Student of Railways" contends that H. Samber's education on engineering matters has been sadly neglected. He is not alone

in that hapless position for "A Student of Railways" wrongfully states that Brunel's famous Saltash bridge crosses the River Tavy. The bridge crosses the River Tamar, the Tavy being a distant tributary of the Tamar adjacent to the home town of

A PLYMOUTHIAN (Wellington).

## BROADCASTING STANDARDS

Sir,—The NZBS has 28 stations at its disposal, and the service received from such equipment is worse than poor. Constructive criticism is easy and has been forthcoming, but is neither welcome nor acted upon. The cost to the public of three farthings a day is dear, although only one-quarter that of a newspaper. Smugness and self-satisfaction are so evident that improvement is very unlikely.

D. BLAICKIE (Southland).

## IN THE STRAIT OF GEORGIA

Sir,—As a Vancouver man I was interested in "G. le F.Y.'s" well-written article (*Listener*, November 30) in which he described a trip on one of the Canadian Pacific Railway ferries between Vancouver and Victoria, on Vancouver Island.

Mr. Y. neglected to make a point of interest to New Zealanders who transport their cars on the inter-island ferries. The Canadian Pacific ships are all designed to accommodate passengers' cars below decks—you simply drive them into the ship through large doors in the hull, and drive them off again at the port of destination. The newest of these ferries, a 6000-ton vessel named *Princess of Nanaimo*, carries 1500 day passengers and between 130 and 150 cars. The *Nanaimo* has 22,500 square feet of parking space on two decks.

New Zealand inter-island steamers, however, load cars ponderously on deck with ship's gear, and they become salt-encrusted during the voyage. Further, comparatively few cars can be carried.

Admittedly, inter-island vessels have to be thoroughly seaworthy (the Straits of Georgia never get very rough), but this fact should not prevent at least the day-trip ships on the Pictou and Nelson runs being designed to accommodate passengers' cars below decks.

CANNUCK (Auckland).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

*Lover of Humour* (Balclutha).—Arrangements are being made to broadcast a series of long BBC plays, including *Mr. Gills*, in the near future.

*Hamiltonian*.—(1) Transmission hours of X class stations are reviewed from time to time. Factors considered, in relation to listeners' needs, include costs, staffing, accommodation and power restrictions. Weekend hours of 2ZA Palmerston North, which was opened in 1938, have been virtually unaltered since 1947. (2) Comparisons wrongly based; for various reasons, the station's recently allotted list cannot at present be extended.

*"Church First"* (New Plymouth).—The Central Religious Advisory Committee's recommendation, which regulates the practice in this matter, is that, while all services for the sake of effectiveness should be limited to one hour, morning services are not cut off if they over-run that time, but evening services are strictly limited and cut off if they exceed 65 minutes. The station records show no example of such action for many months past; but there was one occasion (October 7) when the minister himself, having church notices and other church business to deal with at the end of the service, asked that the broadcast be terminated at the end of the last hymn and gave the technician his cue at that point. You refer to a "morning" service; this was an evening service; but it is the only occasion to which your complaint seems applicable.