

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

PRIVATE LIBRARIES

Sir—The New Zealand Ex-Libris Society is gathering information regarding private book collections in New Zealand, and is preparing for publication a book recording details of such collections.

It is desired to make this list as complete as possible, and my society would be grateful if you would publish this letter, to let those interested know of the plan, and that a form upon which to enter particulars is obtainable from me. We wish to stress that a small carefully gathered group of books would qualify for inclusion as well as—perhaps better than—an aggregation of thousands of volumes.

C. R. H. TAYLOR,
President, N.Z. Ex-Libris Society,
G.P.O. Box 930, Wellington.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Sir,—In your editorial of January 25, entitled "Enigma Variations," you state that these things cannot be proved; they can only be declared, believed or rejected. Also you say it is comforting to know that the supreme enigma will be forever outside the range of science. I maintain that the life after death, the survival of human personality, has been proved over and over again. As to facts, one usually appeals to authority. There is a science known as psychical research comprised of men like William James, Sir William Crookes, Richet, Driesch, Camille Flammarion, Sir William Barrett, Sir Oliver Lodge and many more. In face of the findings of these intellectual giants, I shall be interested in the answer of our *Listener* debaters. Personally I have proved human survival, and to me that is greater than the illustrious names I have quoted. The life after death is the basis of all religions and survival has been scientifically proved.

THE STUDENT (Wellington).

FACTUAL AND CREATIVE WRITING

Sir,—As one of the "uninitiated or illiterate" may I answer the letter from Guthrie Wilson in *The Listener*, December 21. I should like to commend to him the following books, amongst others, whereby his vision may be widened sufficiently to admit that there are other books worthy of note besides novels: *The Holy Bible*, *Hakluyt*, *Two Years Before the Mast*, *Oregon Trail*, *The Worst Journey in the World*, *Undertone of War*, and *The Kon-Tiki Expedition*.

The well-worn adage, "Truth is stranger than fiction," still holds and, for

that reason, the average well-written factual book has a wider public than the comparable novel.

J. TOFT (Wellington).
(Abridged.—Ed.)

"THE GOOSE GIRL"

Sir,—I have more than once had reason to be grateful to the NZBS for its policy of repeating good programmes. On Saturday, January 26, I was again grateful when I was able to hear from 2YC a second presentation of the BBC play, *The Goose Girl*. This modern version of the fairy tale is, in my opinion, one of the best things to come from the BBC. At a first hearing one is intent upon the story. There is always something happening when the Grimm brothers are telling a tale, and the listener is carried along at a steady pace. Hearing it for a second time, however, one is able to enjoy more fully the good things which formerly had only a glancing attention.

Francis Dillon is a name I have come to look for in BBC productions, and I doubt if he has ever been better than in his treatment of *The Goose Girl*. The principal parts were filled out by excellent character studies, especially the Herald, Bess the mutinous servant girl (who, it seemed to me, had some reasons for discontent), the King and the Prince and, of course, Curlykin. There was something almost cheeky in the use of modern idiom and mannerisms, though it left intact the magical quality of the story. Perhaps this was partly because of the skilful way in which the fairy tale atmosphere was built up. The voices and obscure sounds in the enchanted forest were like passages from the earlier ballet music of Stravinsky, and I was fascinated by the goose-call of Curlykin, especially when it echoed under the gateway where the head of the magic horse was suspended. The whole production proved again that a good fairy tale can be a work of art. And it showed also, I think, that a radio play can arouse the imagination by the skilful use of sound. I doubt if any comparable effect can be reached when all is made plain for us by television.

CURLYKIN (Wellington).

MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Sir,—I was interested to read your article (January 18) on the BBC programme *British Masterpieces*, especially with regard to the churches of Wren. It is time contemporary architects realised their duty to the community. Where in New Zealand can we find beautiful

churches such as Wren built? Architects are abandoning our heritage from Greece, Rome, and other European countries, in favour of a bare, uninteresting facade with no trace of the beautiful motives of decoration, as used in Renaissance architecture. What beauty is there in modern office buildings and houses, with their severe lines and lack of decoration? Surely architects are becoming subsidiary to engineers when they lightly throw aside all that has been handed down to them. An engineer is quite capable of designing a reinforced concrete or steel structure. A builder can build a house without the help of an architect. Any person can plan a house, to suit his personal requirements. An architect's job is to decorate and apply his classical education to make a thing of beauty.

WREN (Wellington).

"FRED AND MAGGIE"

Sir,—Like "Thirty Not Out," I was better able to listen to *Fred and Maggie* 10 years ago than I am today, but I do not forget that there are as many 20-not-outs as there were then. Those who wish to see this time put to better use would surely do well to complain to the commercial sponsors, rather than squawk, Maggie-like, "Oh, dear, what a dreadful thing!" I prefer to rinse my hands of the whole matter.

ARTHUR B. WEST (Helensville).

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

Sir,—The other evening I faced a barrage of static to listen to a talk from 3YC by Owen Jensen. I am interested in contemporary composers, and as the talk was advertised as being on such composers, illustrated by excerpts from their music, I listened expectantly. Imagine my surprise to hear that about five minutes only of the talk was devoted to contemporary composers and only brief mention was made of three of these—Bartok, Berg and Britten. Not one single excerpt of their music was presented with the talk, which consisted mostly of generalities. Surely with such widely advertised talks one can expect what one is promised.

R. DALTON (Stoke).

"PETER AND THE WOLF"

Sir,—The picture in *The Listener* (January 18) of Peter and the Wolf, has a few vital mistakes. For instance, the wolf was caught by the tail, and before that he had swallowed the duck. Peter was up in the tree when he lassooed the wolf's tail, and he had one end of the rope tied to a branch.

MILES WISLANG (Upper Hutt).

A "BOOK SHOP" BROADSIDE

Sir,—The blistering broadside against "digests" in *Book Shop* from 3YA was the best thing I've heard on the radio for a long time. As an English master in a secondary school, I wish that this talk could be included in a Broadcast to Schools programme. Any chance of this?

—J.B.S. (Christchurch).

SCHIZOPHRENIC WRITERS

Sir,—I was interested in A. R. D. Fairburn's review of *Australian Literature* (*Listener*, January 18), and I agreed with much of what he said. But I should like to question his use of the term "lit-

A PLACE ON THE MAP

A FEW weeks ago the new Oxford Atlas was the subject of a leading article in "The Listener." Among the criticisms made of the atlas was the failure to give New Zealand a place to itself. Evidence that the habit of linking New Zealand to Australia is not universal among postwar cartographers has now been supplied by a new settler from the Netherlands who called on "The Listener" with an atlas published in Amsterdam in 1950.

The "Winkler Prins Atlas" is a large volume, interesting for a number of reasons; but the feature of most interest to "The Listener" was the full page devoted to New Zealand. Admittedly, the map is a little smaller in scale than the Oxford version, which was fitted into a double-page spread given mainly to Australian States; but it stands on its own, and there is even room for insets of the Cook Islands, the Kermadecs, and the Chatham Islands. Moreover, the West Coast sounds in the South Island are named. It must be recorded, a little sorrowfully, that Havelock which is out of position on the Oxford map, has disappeared completely in the Dutch atlas. But there is no mention of "Australasia."

Opposite the map of New Zealand is a page of information, and at the foot of it is a quotation in French: "La Nouvelle-Zélande: c'est la Grande-Bretagne transportée aux Antipodes, avec le puritanisme et l'observance du Dimanche" (Pierre Rémond, 1950). Can this mean that we have been both mapped and labelled?

erary schizophrenia" to describe the Australian writer's division of interest between European and local ideas and ways of living. Admittedly, the word "schizophrenia" is widely used nowadays. It is common to hear intellectuals throwing off statements about "the schizophrenia of the age." But it is surely quite meaningless or at least inexact when it is applied to writers who are working between two literary traditions.

According to my dictionary, schizophrenia is a mental disease "marked by disconnection between thoughts, feelings and actions." I can't for the life of me see any disconnection of this sort in writers anywhere—unless, of course, they happen to be insane. There does not seem to be any reason why the word should be taken from its proper usage and applied loosely to the kind of situation described by Mr. Fairburn. The English language still allows us to describe states of mind without calling upon the special terms or jargon of clinical psychology. Unfortunately, the practice seems to be increasing. And now that Hollywood is taking an interest in psycho-analysis we can expect almost anything to happen. But it's a pity. Language is healthier when it holds firmly to concrete words.

J.K.L. (Gore).

THE MAN OF LITTLE FAITH

"ALAS" is my cry, who dare not ask for less
Than all God's mercy, should I turn to find
Christ at my elbow carrying my cross
Myself a spear against His open wound.

"CHRIST" were my cry, who have no eyes to see
What place is mine, if place indeed I have;
Mirroring His and my perplexity,
Who cannot reach Him nor ignore His love.

"CHRIST" were my cry, who cry instead "Alas,"
Wearing my dunce-cap like a crown of thorns;
Yet Christ, if He be that, my first witness is
I have a hunger in my soul that burns

BY night and day, which nothing can dispel;
And, though I put it out, it smoulders still.

—Anton Vogt