

THE "PROMS" CONCERTS

Sir,—As an ardent music lover, I would like to express my appreciation of the excellent series of "Proms" concerts which were presented here in Wellington. The programmes, although a trifle hackneyed, were well balanced, and no one should have cause to complain that they did not hear at least one of their favourite works. The performances did the National Orchestra great credit; and in some instances were equal to all but the very best I have heard from orchestras in England. The undoubted success of this venture should encourage greater efforts. Perhaps, in the next series, we would look forward to hearing Mr. Bowles conduct a Beethoven or even a Sibelius symphony?

One thing, however, puzzles me. Why are Wellington audiences so conservative in their applause? Two performances, and in particular Vincent Aspey's superb treatment of the Bruch concerto, merited much more praise than they received. When we are privileged to hear performances which are well-nigh perfect, it is only fair to the artists that we should give our praise unstintingly.

At the next series, how fine it would be if an atmosphere reminiscent of the Royal Albert Hall could be created, even at the risk of making ex-London promenaders feel nostalgic.

D. ARMITAGE (Wellington).

"PROFESSOR" EDWARDS

Sir,—In your issue of March 7, "Swarf" says that he had to wait for the overseas papers to read about "Professor" Jimmy Edwards being appointed Rector of Aberdeen University. The item did appear in the cable news in the *New Zealand Herald*. I cannot recall the date, but it would be shortly after the appointment was announced. A search through the files of that paper would verify the appearance of the story which contained "Swarf's" facts and a few more besides.

The session "Moray McLaren Talking" on the General Overseas Service of the BBC also had something to say about the appointment of Mr. Edwards.

R.A.M. (Makara).

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Sir,—Although I was an interested listener, I was not very happy about the two of the "Life after Death" series of talks which I heard;—or about your editorial comment thereon, concerning artists: "Above all, they see around them so much wonder and miracle in earthly life that a future existence becomes a rational expectation." If you had written "irrational," I could have agreed; but I know little of how artists think, and your meaning might have escaped me therefore.

Mr. Brassington well said that religion was concerned with certainty and science with probability; doubt was a vice in religion, a virtue in science. But he seemed to wish to establish some sort of logical contradiction between religious faith and scientific knowledge. These appear to be merely complementary, and his argument that the after life is not proved, is, to my mind, insufficient. Scientific proof is not, I hope, a requisite of belief. If Mr. Brassington insists too much on scientific scrutiny, he might reach the position of Chesterton's acquaintance: "A man who has such a passion for proving that he will have no personal existence after death that he falls back on the position that he has no personal existence now

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

...in order to prove that he cannot go to Heaven, he proves that he cannot go to Hartlepool."

Father Johnston set out a classical argument for belief in after life. Unfortunately it was one of those arguments from belief to belief, where the premise is no more likely to be admitted than the conclusion, and where the non-admission of the premise would make the whole thing meaningless. To his great credit, Father Johnston criticised the exclusion of the argument from revelation which alone, I think, is admissible to believers. To them who refuse to believe—or who, as Bertrand Russell puts it, see no reason to believe—one might as well say nothing.

ROBERT MOUAT (Christchurch).

Sir,—D. Martin, in your issue of February 29, maintains that if life after death is proved "salvation through faith would become an absurdity and salvation through proof must become its substitute." Proofs have been given (in Thomas Aquinas's *De Anima* for instance) that man has a soul which, because it is spiritual, is indivisible, therefore cannot be annihilated, is immortal. In other words, the soul must live on after the death of the body. This however does not entail the obligation of faith. Rather, it is one of the bases on which a relation, between the Creator of that soul and the creature, may be sought for, and only if that basis is thought reasonable can it be superseded by faith, which in revelation finds a more detailed and explicit account of that relation. But, as Cobbett once said, it is one thing to be convinced and another to believe. Faith in revelation is not the necessary extension of the conclusions of natural theology. Many, though, find it a likely one.

P. DRONKE (Wellington).

Sir,—D. Martin says faith is sufficient, and proof not necessary. This may be true of some, but others seek and find. There was no mystery before the Christian era. The Bible gives proof of this. Two thousand years ago Christ came to teach a new religion. It was a way of life embodying service to humanity, individual freedom, kindness, love and mercy. He constantly demonstrated the use of spiritual gifts, and said his followers would do greater things. Some centuries after the Crucifixion the Christian Church was established. A church council met at Nicea and built up a religion with no resemblance to the teaching of Christ. At this time, tens of thousands of natural mediums were put to death. If not, they would have exposed the false religion established. As the centuries passed, learned men in science and literature became aroused by the reports of psychic phenomena, which they patiently investigated. They gave to the world their findings that death was not the end.

THE STUDENT (Wellington).

Sir,—Father T. A. Johnson says: "Every living thing has a soul"—plants, animals, man. Terrible thought; as I toddle up and down the bowling green, I trample on millions of lying souls! Some of Father Johnson's main points: Soul gives life (is life), is independent of matter, and the nature of souls may be judged by their manifestations through matter; every soul acts according to its nature; souls live for ever.

Reasonable inferences from this seem to be: The great totality of what is hor-

rible and repulsive beneath the fair exterior of what we call nature is the result of souls acting according to their nature. The chronicle of abnormalities, brutalities, cruelties, degradations, lusts, oppressions, persecutions and slaughter which makes up the history of mankind is the result of souls acting according to their nature. If souls live for ever and pass to another life, this makes moonshine of the doctrine of reward and punishments in that life. For where is the justice, love or mercy in punishing in another life a soul that acted according to its nature in this life? Moreover, if God is prevented from putting into effect his allegedly kind intentions towards man by the action of souls in this life (as even bishops attest), he will still be prevented by those souls in another life. In brief, as souls live for ever and act according to their nature, any future life will necessarily be a replica of this life. I have not the slightest wish to live this life again; if I were offered the chance to live my personal share of it over again, I would refuse.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

NINE O'CLOCK NEWS

Sir,—The arrangement of the 9.0 p.m. news would be greatly improved by returning to the grouping of the overseas and the New Zealand news in two separate sections; it would not matter much which came first, though one would naturally expect world affairs to come before local news. I find the present jumble rather disconcerting.

H. (Oxford).

(The rearrangement, to which this letter is the first recorded objection, was prompted by the fact that the old arrangement frequently gave priority over fresh items of New Zealand news to overseas items that had already been broadcast, and priority also, to overseas items of slight interest, though fresh, over New Zealand news of wider interest. Your proposal to return to two sections could not solve this problem of priority or of relative news values, whichever section were placed first. The aim in the rearranged bulletin is to present the news in what appears to be the due order of importance as two tests help to determine it: extent of interest and topical freshness.—Ed.)

A CHESTNUT TREE

Sir,—In your issue of February 15 an illustration of a very large chestnut tree brings to my mind a similar tree in Fredville Park, Kent. So large was it (and I haven't heard that it is not still growing there) that 20 people could sit down to tea in it. A rustic ladder led to the middle of the branches and a rustic table had been fixed there and planks across the limbs round it. At the bottom of the ladder was a receptacle for paper and rubbish with a notice pointing out that, as long as people used it, there would be no restriction to visitors. The tree overlooked the gardens of Fredville House, and the grand sight of many rhododendron bushes in bloom brought the majority of sightseers at that season. I'm sorry I haven't a photo of the Chestnut Tree, which was locally spoken of as The Step Tree.

C. L. DALE (Whangarei).

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Sir,—Although I agreed with most of Arthur Manning's recent "Lookout" talk, I consider it naive today to utter publicly such statements as "... Germany has shown no remorse for plunging the world into a second world war." Hitler

repeatedly said that Britain would one day be fighting alongside Germany against the Bolsheviks, and as Hitler was right about this, he could have been right about some other things, and I think he was. Hitler saved Germany from a red revolution, and cleaned up the existing immorality deliberately being inculcated in Germany by certain people. Hitler never wanted to fight England, and instead of our entering the war against Germany on account of Poland (and look at Poland today, under the iron heel of Communism!) Britain should have permitted Hitler to make his traditional drive east, and so have smashed up the Marxist citadel in Moscow. In the meantime the British Empire could have consolidated its position in the event of an attack from Germany. We have been a party to hanging "war criminals," and I think this was a tragic mistake. Mr. Churchill was always of this opinion. Germany certainly did wrong things in the war, but then so did we, when we consider one instance of the bombing of the Mohne and Eder dams which drowned thousands of innocent German women and children. It is in the interests of the British Commonwealth to consolidate friendship with Germany today. "United we stand" applies with terrific emphasis today against the atheistic, evil slave-labour ideology of the Marxist Communists.

ATLANTIC PACT (Christchurch).

NICOLAI MEDTNER

Sir,—The article on Medtner in *The Listener* of February 29 conveys a false impression of this composer when it states that "He had no sympathy with the moderns. His own music always had great charm and lyricism with no trace of the more pungent modern tendencies." On the contrary, after studying his music over a long period, I have found that a good deal of it contains passages which are far ahead of his period in thought and which possess much of the cacophony usually acclaimed by and for the "moderns," in fact it is often deliberate. Particularly in the sonata Op. 30 and Op. 39 as well as in the Variation Op. 47 the dominant themes are almost dissonant.

The concerto mentioned as being played by Colin Horsley also contains a good deal of music distinguished more by powerful discordance than by lyricism.

M. T. DIXON (Christchurch).

A PHOTOGRAPH

Sir,—Old Boys of Lincoln College who as students posed for the photograph appearing in your issue of February 29 in *Shepherd's Calendar* will be as amused as I at the caption. Thank you for publishing one of many photographs taken while I was at C.A.C., and which were never seen by those involved.

ONE OF THE CROWD (Gore).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

I.H.C. (Wairoa).—It could not be arranged. But there may be an opportunity later.

Crossword Fan. (Gisborne).—See answers to other letters on the same subject, *Listener*, March 7.

F. J. Devine (Auckland).—Many thanks. Afraid too long for publication.

Morning Star (Nelson).—Suggest you write to the station from which you hear the programme. The title is used by several stations.