

APRIL 28, 1944

## The Wrong Tree

A CORRESPONDENT suggests to-day that it is not wise to leave dogs barking too long up the wrong tree. He is right, but he is a spoiler of fun. He refers of course to the letters we printed last week attacking us for a footnote of the week before. That footnote contained two simple statements: (1) that it is foolish to rush into print without knowledge, and (2) that it is impudent for a visitor to insult his hosts. The reason for (1) was a "protest" by "a British subject visiting this country for the first time" against "the withdrawal of the BBC feature, *Brains Trust*." The feature had not been withdrawn, and has not been withdrawn yet. On the contrary it had been obtained with great difficulty and at considerable expense, and was being broadcast as regularly as the irregular mails from Britain permitted. We don't know a better word for that kind of impetuosity than folly. The reason for (2) was this passage:

While writing might I suggest that for the prestige of this country only the proceedings of the House of Representatives which are of interest to the bulk of the people of the country be broadcast. I do not think that the majority of the people wish to hear the "brawlings" which take place, and are more concerned with the vital issues under discussion.

A visitor of fine feelings and good sense would not suggest anything of the kind. Whatever he thought about us he would wait to be asked before making any public comment, and then he would not pretend to know the wishes of the "majority of the people." In fact this visitor behaved very much as one would behave who had been invited to lunch and very early in the meal criticised the cutlery or the cooking or the pictures on the wall. If there is a better word than the one we used to describe such conduct we should be glad to know what it is. At present we don't know it or we should use it here. But we know of something more remarkable than the spectacle of a visiting Englishman walking into Hawke's Bay to sneer at the intelligence and taste of New Zealanders. It is the spectacle of a smirking New Zealander applauding him.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## THE WRONG TREE

Sir,—I was surprised that you did not make the obvious answer to these correspondents who complained of your footnote to "British Visitor." Not one of them kept to the point—which was that a man not long enough in New Zealand to know it was taking a risk in criticising it. My personal opinion is that he was being used by people of longer residence here, and encouraged to make remarks that they though would injure the Government. But whether I am right or wrong in this, I suggest that it is not wise to let dogs bark too long up the wrong tree. Make your position known.—BOW-WOW (Petone).

## A POEM AND A PICTURE

Sir,—I was delighted to read in a recent issue a delightful sonnet by Ronald Buchanan. It was ironically entitled "Love Sonnet." I have read it three times, but each time I have been painfully aware of the loss of the "iambic pentametre" in the first four lines of the poem—four accents instead of five. The 10 lines following in the Shakespearean form of the sonnet are perfect in rhythm, form and cadence—so much so that one almost forgives the lapse in the first four lines.

While I am about it, I should like to thank you, Mr. Editor, for *The Listener's* wonderful reproduction of the Madonna's Head from Michelangelo's "Pieta." To all lovers of beauty among your many readers this must be a joy untold.—A. E. GUNTER (Palmerston North).

## ART AND THE PUBLIC

Sir,—William Dobell's picture may be a very good picture for all I know; I have not seen it. But Mr. Dobell is not fair to the general public. It is simply not true that the average man can only appreciate a picture if it is like a coloured photograph. Very often he detests coloured photographs.

A man may have something to say. If he chooses paint as his medium and fails to make himself understood, he has failed, and that's about it; he cannot logically resort to another medium to make his meaning clear. Time may come to his aid in the future or it may not. On the other hand a painter may have nothing to say; he may merely wish to tell you about something that he has seen. But this world cannot be "merely copied." The range of light and shade alone prohibits this. It has to be interpreted. The painter must also tell us what he has felt about it, and in doing so need not resort to misrepresentation.—JAS. FITZGERALD (Christchurch).

## GERT AND DAIS

Sir,—*"Materfamilias"* has the space of an article in which to disagree with me, and I must confine my remarks to the space of a letter.

1. If *"Materfamilias"* is comparatively unacquainted with American humour how does she know that the American listeners get other and better comedy than the McGee programmes?

2. I think *"Materfamilias"* makes too much of national barriers in comedy (there are Rabelais and Don Quixote; and I know a child who wanted to see a picture of a goblin and turned down

as unsatisfactory all those offered till he saw some in some humorous Japanese pictures). *"Materfamilias"* says that if one nation could laugh at another's humour that would do much toward promoting world unity; and yet she puts down clowning as childish, though it is the most universal of all comedy.

3. I still maintain that if one laughs at Gert and Dais one is not appreciating the comedy of those programmes. Gert and Dais are not satire.

4. I have always enjoyed the best of the *Easy Aces* programmes without knowing the counterpart in real life. Here again, I think *"Materfamilias"* has missed the point if she regards Jane Ace's silliness as the crux of the comedy. In a few of these programmes Jane Ace has risen to the height of the classical fool with cap and bells who points out the folly of those who laugh at her.

5. If I had children who liked seeing the glorious wreck of things going smash without a few years of weekly picture-going, and if I regard a psychologist friend as an authority, I should certainly call in her aid.

JOCASTO (Dunedin).

## "THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAINS"

Sir,—Does James W. Tate ever get his share of the credit for *The Maid of the Mountains*, which is usually attributed to the late Harold Fraser-Simson? Looking through my score I should select the following as the most popular and best-known numbers: "My Life is Love," "Love Will Find a Way," "A Paradise for Two," "A Bachelor Gay," "When You're in Love." Most of these are known to the average radio-listener. All except the second were composed by James W. Tate.

A. C. KEYS (Auckland)

## ORANGES AND LEMONS

Sir,—Children of all ages will be interested in a most interesting item (and an actual happening) from Radio Newsreel on a recent Darenty programme, being a postscript to the well-known nursery rhyme "Oranges and Lemons." It went, briefly, as follows:—

A choir of children sang the first two lines of the rhyme, "Oranges and lemons, says the bells of St. Clement's."

The bells of St. Martin-in-the-Fields then rang out the two following lines, "You owe me five farthings, says the bells of St. Martin's."

The story then goes on that an artist, making sketches amid the ruins of St. Clement Danes Church in The Strand, noticed a coin on the ground. On wiping off the dust he discovered it to be a farthing. Looking carefully around he found four more farthings and no more.

Rushing off to consult some recognised authority, for in the excitement of his discovery he was not quite sure if the rhyme really said five farthings, he confirmed that this was indeed so.

Then later, at a simple ceremony, held among the ruins of the blitzed church of St. Clement Danes, the five farthings were handed over to officials of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, thus repaying an age-old debt.

E. MILES SAMUEL (Wellington).