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Graeme Holder

THE death a few days ago of Graeme Holder robbed New Zealand of a talent for which the only single-word description is unique. He was not the only New Zealander who lived by his pen. Every journalist does that. Nor was he our only full-time writer whose imagination fed and clothed him. We have at least one author in that category still, and have had two or three. But we have never had a writer whose task every day and every week was to produce fiction in dramatic form, to produce it week by week as it was required, who did produce it, and who lived on the result. This Graeme Holder did for several years, to the entire satisfaction of his chief patron, the National Broadcasting Service, and to the great delight of listeners in many other parts of the English-speaking world, since his radio plays were in demand in Australia, Canada, South Africa, and Britain, as well as in his own Dominion. That would have been a remarkable performance for a man trained to writing from school-days, endowed with leisure, and helped by a wide and liberal education. But Graeme Holder would have described himself as almost entirely un-educated, which though it would have been far from the truth, would have been true formally. When others of his age were at school or university he was at sea, with about the same chance of educating himself as a tram-conductor has on continuous relief duty. He was seeing life, of course, different places and different kinds of men, but even when he escaped from the sea it was to carry on the economic struggle in a new setting. Liberty and leisure never came to him at all, but freedom to choose his own way came when he dredged it out of his imagination, and then he kept on dredging almost to the day of his untimely death. It is impossible not to wonder what would have happened if he had lived another 25 years.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, NOVEMBER 3

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MURDER!

Sir,—One of the most outrageous and cruel things I have ever heard was the murder of "The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond" committed in the studio at 2YA at approximately 8.15 p.m. on October 20. When so many beautiful physical things are being destroyed surely there is no need to murder our lovely old songs.

A REAL SCOTS LASSIE
(Thornton's Bay).

JEWS AND ARABS

Sir,—I realise that you could not print everything that was said in the interview I gave *The Listener*, but should be grateful if you would allow me to add two facts that to me are most important.

1. We were originally promised Biblical Palestine. Later, Transjordan and other pieces were cut away from the original Palestine. As a result the Jews to-day occupy in Palestine about seven per cent of one-third of the area originally known as Palestine.

2. We do not dispossess Arabs. The population of Palestine in 1917 was about 58,000 Jews and 450,000 Arabs. To-day it is 600,000 Jews and over 1,000,000 Arabs. In other words, for every Jew who has entered Palestine under the Balfour Declaration an Arab has also entered (about 550,000 in each case).

IDA M. SILVERMAN (Auckland).

THE RHINE

Sir,—Your contributor, A.M.R., draws a picture of the Rhine and the surrounding country which, if not quite false, yet conveys an entirely wrong impression in telescoping happenings which are separated by several centuries. It is incorrect that:

1. "Englishmen brought the fabulous age of the Rhineland to an end."

2. That the Hohenzollern were actively involved in the Crusades.

3. That Neukölln (which incidentally is spelt with ll, whilst Köln is spelt with one l only) is a "colony of the Rhineland."

4. That the robber-barons were the most important political factor during some centuries. The ecclesiastical princes, the Archbishops of Trier, Cologne and Mainz (the last-named was Chancellor of the Reich) should at least have been mentioned in this connection.

5. That one can—without explanation—jump from the Battle of Tannenberg (1410) to Bismarck's foundation of the Second Reich in 1870, without even mentioning either the Great Elector or Frederick the Great, who laid the foundation stone of Prussia.

6. That the Cult of the Rhine has always existed. It is of comparatively recent date, and was a deliberate creation (we would term it propaganda to-day) of German Romantic writers before and during the Wars of Liberation (1813-14): Men like Schenkendorf, Arndt, the creator of the slogan "The Rhine a German river, not the German border"; and others who like the brothers Grimm and Brentano, revived interest in German folk lore, folk songs and legends centred round the banks of the Rhine.—PERNICKETY (Wellington).

(A.M.R. pleads—"1. Guilty: 'fabulous' should read 'heavenly.' 2. to 6.: Not guilty—I never done it. The alternative to telescoping history is not to write it.")

WHY DON'T WE SPEAK?

Sir,—The reasons offered in your leading article of October 13, "Why Don't We Speak?" as justification for your silence about the recent happenings in Warsaw are apt to create grave concern in the minds of at least some of your readers. Your main argument seems to impute that the deliberate use of half-truths and misleading reports by all belligerent Governments makes, generally speaking, the ascertaining of facts a difficult proposition. So it does. However, ignoring a case like that of Warsaw, which is, to use a rather hackneyed term, a real test case concerning the conscience not only of all belligerents but of all humanity, on grounds that it is difficult to assess the facts, seems hard to reconcile with a responsible journalist's standing.

In every dispute, political and non-political, there is a divergence of testimonials and arguments. Yet it is the duty of a judge to pronounce a verdict in a legal case, doubtful as it may be; and so could an opinion on happenings that stir so deeply the conscience of its readers not be expected from a paper of as good a standing as yours?

Similarly, to defer judgment to A.D. 1950, in a case involving the fate of thousands of men and women who are dying now, is truly a strange attitude to take—strange, and yet somewhat familiar. It is reminiscent of a judgment framed many years ago: the judge was Pontius Pilate.

L. HARTMAN (Wellington).

(They are not judges, but fanatics or frauds who pronounce verdicts before the facts have been established.—Ed.).

THE COAL SHORTAGE

Sir,—Since the shortage of bituminous coal, complaints about the substitute of lignite for household use have been loud, long and frequent. Mainly they are unjustified and the result of lack of understanding of the proper use of this fuel. I was brought up in Central Otago, where lignite is almost the only fuel normally obtainable, and a poor lignite at that. Here are some directions. Take plenty of kindling wood and paper. Set the fire very carefully with four crossed layers of kindling. Light the fire and wait till the wood is well alight. Carefully place lumps of lignite on top. Place a few pieces of kindling on top of that. Then more lumps of lignite. Watch the fire carefully, and nurse it for 20 minutes. Use a "blower." In Otago it's a sheet of iron curved, with a wooden handle. In the North Island it's a sheet of newspaper. A scrap or two of fat at this stage will sometimes suffice to turn the whole encounter.

Now it's alight at last. Keep feeding it till the grate is full. No slack coal until now. Relax, and don't touch it, or let even a friend of seven years' standing touch it. It's right for the rest of the evening—a steady, good heat, and no attention whatever required.

But some don'ts: don't be careless about that first setting of the kindling frame. Don't use slack till it's well alight. Don't poke it.

If you reverse all the above directions, you have the correct directions for bituminous coal.

VINCENT COUNTY (Eastbourne).