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- (1) Sleep with the window well open. Fresh air benefits the eyes.
- (2) Don't read facing or backing the window. Arrange if possible, for the light to come over your left shoulder.
- (3) Never rub the eye if you have a piece of dirt in it, or if you have a sty or boil. Always bathe the eye and if the trouble persists, consult a doctor.
- (4) Don't read in bright sunlight or twilight.
- (5) If you have the slightest doubt as to the efficiency of your sight, consult a Qualified Practitioner at once.

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"LOTS OF POETRY"

More Letters From Listeners

To the Editor:

Sir,—Your footnote to my letter on the article, "Lots of Poetry," goes unerringly to the personal mark. But editorial pique need not blind you to the point raised. It should be clear that I was not protesting against a light hand with reviews—whether of poetry or political science—but against the insincerity of this particular review, i.e., the subordination of criticism to a certain journalistic effect. That, I suggest, is quite different from the conveying of criticism in a certain journalistic style. I would refer you to the passages in which the reviewer discusses himself, not the books, and the references to God. One of these latter might be taken to rule out all devotional poetry from Caedmon to Gerard Manley Hopkins, if the reviewer meant to be taken seriously upon what is, after all, quite commonly considered a serious topic. I do not question but that this particular verse is bad. I do question both the sincerity and the taste of the comment. The result of it was (as my letter indicated) that the best part of a page went to such comment on verse which the writer clearly (and no doubt justly) despised, and the two or three poets he rated higher (no doubt correctly) received a little weary praise when he got tired of playing. All this roused me to the intemperate pitch of a personal tilt at your editorial policy, which is (I understand you to remind me) your own affair. At the same time, a reader may exercise his right to protest; in doing so, he may make the mistake of taking the editor too seriously, rather than himself. Perhaps there is something in the Wellington climate that makes certain things seem amusing, as they do not elsewhere, like the good hearty fun at clergy conferences. A little "solemn nonsense" now and then may do no harm. Do we see it? Or don't we.

ALLEN CURNOW (Christchurch).

Sir,—In a recent number "J.C.B." gave what purported to be a criticism of certain New Zealand verse, not long published, including my "Poems." I cannot quite understand why an editor should select a writer for such an office who admits at the outset that he never knows quite where he is with poetry, nor why the writer himself should approach with any hope of success a task which he openly admits is, in effect, a beastly bore. There was a time, long ago, when literary criticism was frankly destructive and nothing more. Later schools at least profess to be intelligently interpretive. A critic who approaches his subject in a bad temper, faced with a veritable "load" of verse which he has somehow to struggle through, confessing that he has as little aptitude as inclination for the task, stands self-condemned. Let me tell him that I am proud to be pilloried with "Robin Hyde," Mr. Marris, and Mervyl Connolly. For though the daughter of the Honourable M. J. Connolly is not mentioned by name, she is one of "the nest of singing birds" he approaches with his schoolboy shanghai. Yet no less a person than Walter de la

Mare praises the very poems of this young lady, which Mr. Marris includes in one of his little books of "Best Poems," and which "J.C.B." dismisses with contempt. It is a little comforting, doubtless, to Miss Connolly, Mr. Marris, the shades of Robin Hyde and myself to remember that other critics in the little literary world of New Zealand, and beyond, do not share "J.C.B.'s" fits of petulance and exhibitionism. It is true that "J.C.B.'s" initials do resound a little, though rather hollowly, in certain select circles in this country, but many who differ diametrically with him in the matter at issue are at least equally respected for their scholarship and judgment. Which reminds me that I referred during the past Parliamentary session, with approval, to some verses of J.C.B.'s own. In the lobby afterwards a really scholarly colleague said to me, "The chap who wrote that tosh should have been drowned at birth." So perhaps J.C.B. and I are both wrong. I did at least try to appreciate him. You will see, Sir, that I continue to do so.—CLYDE CARR (House of Representatives).

Sir,—I have been reading poetry and literary criticism all my fairly long life. Allen Curnow having challenged your reviewer in silly fashion, I should like to say that the article "Lots of Poetry" delighted me. I know others of similar tastes who felt the same. It had wit and wisdom, and that conjunction is much too rare to be stifled. To adapt Father O'Flynn, "Cannot the critics be Irishmen too?" I have read most of Iris Wilkinson's poems and I found to my considerable satisfaction that your critic had clearly expressed opinions about her that had been floating vaguely in my mind. Let's have plenty more of such criticism.

Mr. Curnow cites *The New Yorker*. That brightly and astrigent periodical is one of my favourites. Indeed I'm not happy if I don't get it. But I have seen some darned silly literary criticism in it. IAMBIC (Wellington).

Sir,—In accusing Allen Curnow of taking himself too seriously I think you overlook the real point. The review he complained about was in one sense a good one. But its opening and closing paragraphs had too much the flavour of urbane condescension—of a visit to the nursery by the good-humoured uncle, or something of that sort. In your excellent film reviews there is just the proper degree of seriousness. By comparison, "J.C.B.'s" review carried the underlying suggestion that poetry is not a very important business, after all. I got the impression that he was writing down to what he conceived to be public taste. God forbid that discussion of poetry should be carried on with any false solemnity. But I do think you should show a little more understanding when a responsible poet of Mr. Curnow's reputation objects to the attitude implied in your reviewer's title and his opening remarks. For my part, I should

(continued on next page)