

AUGUST 10, 1945

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## Tears But No Blood

**D**EMOCRACY enables us to change our rulers without cutting off their heads; and it does this periodically. Therefore it provides surprises occasionally, but few sensations. When it does provide a sensation, a change so unexpected and dramatic that the most cautious are caught off guard, we are worried until we find a face-saving formula. Then we settle down again—and the settling down of the United Kingdom has been almost as sensational as the upheaval. No one living can remember anything so unexpected as Labour's annihilation of all the other parties—even in New Zealand, where half of us are still living in the glow and half in the shadow of 1935. But this article is being written less than a week after the event (August 1), and the London newspapers have passed already to other topics. There is one brief cable message to-day about Mr. Churchill's future home, a briefer message (twenty-four hours old) announcing his refusal of the Garter, and one of 400 words suggesting that when Japan has been conquered there may be changes in Britain's foreign policy—those three references and no other of any kind to the fact that Britain has just completed a political revolution. Nor is the explanation any kind of conspiracy of silence. Tears there no doubt are, and a feeling in certain places that the less they indulge it the sooner they will forget their sorrow; but no section of the community has been struck dumb, and no section of the Press forbidden to comment. The decision has been accepted with about the same degree of resignation as a change in the weather, and something like the same knowledge that weather changes work both ways, spoiling holidays, but encouraging crops. So they change seats at Westminster and shed not a drop of blood. Democracy has sprung a surprise, but not found it necessary to give any lessons in anatomy.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## PAGEANT OF MUSIC

Sir,—To be attacked in your columns by so venerable an exponent of the spoken word as Homer himself leaves me flattened; but what can this bard know of the pitfalls of modern journalism? I wrote "Cerberus," but my copy is re-typed at *The Listener* office in Wellington, set up and printed in Auckland, always against time, and the marvel to me is that there are so few mis-prints. It is an axiom of journalism that mis-prints, when they do happen, appear in the most unfortunate places, such as in a sentence where one is accusing somebody else of inaccuracy.

Like "Homer" I had consulted some classical manuals and found that there were several versions of the number of heads on the dog, though no classical reporter seems to have headed him up as "septiceps." One might expect Homer to view Virgil as a "pale imitator," but the point is that it was the Virgil tradition that prevailed in Gluck's time. These few seconds of the Gluck recording were put on expressly for us to hear the bold innovation of the orchestral woofs; the music itself is explicit, and any preliminary comment should be explicit too. If, as Homer suggests, Gluck had Horace's estimate in mind, but decapitated the dog 97 per cent. because he had cold feet at the thought of asking his orchestra to woof, he behaved in a wishy-washy fashion which must be unique in the history of musical composition, and Mr. Luscombe should have commented on it at length. Homer thought he heard Mr. Luscombe refer to the "many-headed" dog. I was listening with a companion who has had an even longer acquaintance with Cerberus than I have and we were simultaneously startled to hear that the peril of the *tria guttura* had increased 133 1-3 per cent. We had been drinking black coffee and were wide awake, but everyone knows how apt Homer is to nod.

In suggesting that passengers refrain from bothering Mr. Luscombe while he is steering between Scylla and Charybdis, Homer reveals his antiquated idea of this journey; modern passengers, namely, radio listeners, keep saying to the helmsman, "Is your journey really necessary?" If he can't convince them that it is, they just fly away. I said in the paragraph in question that Mr. Luscombe's job was an unenviable one. I don't suppose that he likes this "digest" form of musical education any more than I do. But I still think that both in speed and relevancy he could make better use of the time between the records. This, as I made clear, is only my own opinion. — VIEWSREEL COMMENTATOR (Auckland).

## EROSION

Sir,—It is good that you should call attention to the question of erosion and its complement reafforestation. On a long view it is perhaps the most important question of domestic policy, or rather statesmanship. For on our will to take it in hand depends the whole future of New Zealand: whether we shall remain a fertile and prosperous country, or an impoverished variant of the Dust-bowl. We have inherited a fertile country. What have we done with it in 100 years? We have destroyed nine-tenths of the forest, and are destroying what is

left a hundred times as fast as it can be replaced. There is no scientific control of lumbering. Anyone with sufficient pull can get a licence to cut any part of the bush, however disastrous the effects may be. "An aristocracy plants trees: a democracy cuts them down." Unfortunately there are no votes to be got out of it. Three-year Parliaments don't produce 30, 50, or 100-year long-term policies.

The timber famine of the future is bad enough, but the erosion that follows unrestricted exploitation of the bush is worse. The last big flood caused almost incredible erosion on the East Coast. We are bound to have big floods again and again, and each succeeding flood will do more damage than the last. All our best lands are valley silts and it is first these that suffer most. Eskdale was the latest sample.

Coupled with the economic is the aesthetic side of the question. Are we going to allow our beautiful scenery to be ruined by a selfish determination to get present luxury and comfort—even at the expense of our descendants? We have only to see what has happened at Taupo to understand how a narrow and uncultured procedure can do irreparable harm. The blasting away of all the island, rocks and rapids between Taupo and Huka was a piece of brutal vandalism, very costly and quite useless for the purpose it was intended for. And now we are promised further mutilations at Huka and Araratia.

I am old-fashioned enough to think that the Government ought to consider itself trustee for the unborn generations as well as the present. So far we have been fraudulent trustees, wasting the capital to satisfy our immediate greed.—K. E. CROMPTON, M.B. (Havelock North).

Sir,—In an article "Sleepers Awake" (*Listener*, July 20), dealing with soil erosion in New Zealand, the author's statements regarding Region III. are inaccurate. In the first place the Esk Valley and the Te Ngaru Valley are six miles apart and not one and the same as the author suggests; neither is the Tangoio school a new structure "out on the silted flat," but a building reconditioned after the earthquake and standing on high ground, none of which was touched by flood waters. The derelict chimney stacks are not the result of the flood, but of the earthquake, which rendered the dwellings uninhabitable and so were pulled down.

I agree with the author that the general appearance of the Te Ngaru Valley is one of decrepitude, but only because it is farmed by natives, who take no interest in their land when so much can be earned so easily elsewhere.

The silting of the Esk and the Ngaru Valleys was due to the shattering of the hillsides by the 1931 earthquake. This is proved by the severe flood of 1924, when 17 inches of rain fell in under four hours and yet no silting occurred.

WAIPAHITI (Tangoio).

## GOD AND MAN

Sir,—I think that J. Malton Murray's conception that God could create wickedness in any man is completely wrong. Certainly God is unchangeable and eternal, has created the world, and given all

peoples the power to procreate. But He can never create wickedness or evil and such wickedness as Hitler and Mussolini and millions of others have shown has come because, having been given free will, they have chosen to break all God's laws, given in the Ten Commandments and by His own personal teaching while on earth. A. CHRISTIAN (Waiau).

## SHOCK TREATMENT

Sir,—O. E. Burton's letter on electric shocks as a treatment for mental patients brings to mind a biography I read recently on the famous Dr. Erasmus Darwin, the founder of the Lunar Society and grandfather of that revolutionary evolutionist, Charles Darwin. Apparently Dr. Darwin was almost as revolutionary as his grandson, for as long ago as the 1770's he practised the electric shock treatment, although it was on a patient suffering from convulsions, and not any permanent form of insanity. Here is the excerpt from the book:—

"When one of Wedgwood's (of Wedgwood china fame) babies suffered convulsions, produced by teething, she lost use of her limbs and sight. The usual nostrum for this disease were burnt blood, a baked raven, with a long etcetera. But Darwin laughed them to scorn, and instructed Wedgwood to chafe the child's limbs, lance her gums, hold her in the bath and electrify her. Though the child recovered the use of her limbs and sight, one is not surprised to learn that she died in infancy; and one cannot help wondering whether, on the whole, she would not have preferred the burnt blood, the baked raven, and possibly even the etcetera. . . ."

Whether it was the electric shock that hastened the end of the infant, or whether she would have died anyway is still a matter of conjecture, but perhaps the Mental Authorities of to-day can answer the question. Like O. E. Burton, I think that more information on the subject would be welcome.

M.R. (Hamilton).

## SIGNATURE TUNES

Sir,—I wonder how many listeners have a complaint to make about the music that is used to introduce radio plays or to separate the scenes of plays. One gets comfortably seated in front of the fire and nicely relaxed to enjoy a play or serial. Suddenly comes through the loud-speaker the signature tune. If one is not very quickly at the volume control one's ears are almost shattered by the loud blast of some usually high-pitched instruments of a very loud band. If one is fortunate enough to reach the control in time and turn the music down to a bearable volume and resumes the comfort of the easy chair one is compelled to be up again at the volume control to turn the speech of the play up to distinct audibility. In a few minutes the scene changes and in comes again a blast of ear-shattering strains with the shrill high-pitched instruments.

One may be tempted to leave the volume in the hope that the noise will not last long. But it always does—very long, in fact, if you risk the hope. So a pleasant evening of plays is spoiled by the constant running to and from the radio set to do a bit of regulating that surely could be done at the broadcasting end. This annoyance is particularly noticeable in the commercial station, from which we in our household get our most interesting plays.

I know they can't please everybody. But I am sure nobody's feelings would be hurt if these musical interludes were made just a little less painful.

F.T.V. (Lower Hutt).