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Forgiving and Forgetting

NOTHING could be more dangerous just now, or more horrible, than a world-wide campaign of vengeance (as distinct from justice and retribution); an eye for an eye, murder for murder, torture for torture. Nothing would more quickly, or more effectively, make victory a mockery and another war certain. But it is only a little less dangerous to forgive and forget; to refuse to believe in atrocities or to hate those responsible for them; and in the end to sneer at all propagandists in case we fall victims to abominable truths. Last week some of us saw the first shipload of rescued prisoners from Singapore and Formosa—several weeks after their rescue. Reporters accustomed to painful sights—accidents, inquests, and the occasional horrors of the Police Courts, who have seen hospital ships full of wounded and the sad homecomings of the permanently maimed, were more depressed by what they saw on the Maunganui than by any duty the war had previously brought them. Two facts that particularly impressed our own representative were, first, the number of men who had been shocked into insensibility, so that they had lost both the power and the inclination to talk, and the burning hatred of the others when they were asked about their Japanese guards. The whole truth about atrocities is of course never told. Something like the truth may get into medical journals—as it did in the case of the *Lancet* and Belsen—but many of the facts are too horrible for lay consumption and are either not published or are hinted at and not understood. But there is a danger in all that, over and above the ordinary consequences of feeding people on half-truths. What we don't know we can't worry about, but if we try not to know we are already half-way to a cowardly complacency, and morally at least compounding felonies.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

"TO-DAY"

Sir,—Your correspondent "Sincere" would be more convincing if when quoting to the effect that "the evidence of Geology to-day is . . ." he gave us the date of that particular "to-day." Joseph Le Conte was born in 1823 and died many years ago; and in the light of modern advances in knowledge of fossil lineages his "to-day" must be thought of as one of the days before yesterday.

Commenting on a geological example of "evolution caught in the act" Leitch (1945) remarks: "If we were to take a series of photographs of these succeeding groups of fossils and string them together in the Disney manner, we should see evolution taking place before our eyes."—"QUOTE FAIR" (Wellington).

EQUALITY

Sir,—Your correspondent G.H.D. makes some comments on the published version of a talk which I gave from 3YA. This was a condensation of the first of a series of four. The series was planned, as I explained, to lead up to the final talk in which I did just what your correspondent has done (though not altogether in the same terms) namely, interpret Jefferson's statement and discuss the various meanings of the word equality. G.H.D. did not apparently hear any of the talks.

I. L. G. SUTHERLAND (Christchurch)
(We apologise to our correspondent for our neglect to print this letter earlier. It reached us on September 6, but was inadvertently overlooked.—Ed.)

FREEDOM OF THE AIR

Sir,—May I make a plea for thorough instruction in our schools in biology. This would not only dispose of the "sex education" question, but would also help to relegate such people as your correspondents "G.H.D." and "Sincere" to whatever limbo the "flat earth" theorists are banished to. It is certainly true that biological thought has made great progress since Darwin's day. It does not follow that any biologist of repute would say that highly organised creatures such as Man appeared suddenly on the earth in their full glory. They are almost certainly the descendants of simpler forms of living in earlier times. All experimental evidence favours such a view. The development of our domestic plants and animals from wild types shows what can be done in the way of evolving new forms of living things from old. No one, as far as we know, has ever developed a new form of plant or animal by any other means than by breeding it from previously existing ancestors.

C. T. WILLIAMS (Kaiapoi).

Sir,—I gather from J. E. Hamill's letter that, since life in this world "would become flat, stale, and negative" without its proportion of shade, Heaven (minus wars and divorces) would be a very boring place and should be avoided at all costs. After all we have only three score and ten years in this world and when we get to the next we are there forever.
H. M. COX (Wellington).

Sir,—Mr. Hulbert owes me an apology for mis-quoting the topic I discussed. A correspondent has since pointed out that this topic was "the theory of

atheistic evolution" (that is, the biological theory of evolution with a bias towards the philosophical theory of atheism) and not "the atheistic theory of evolution."

But I now take up my pen to save my cause from a would-be defender. Mr. Hulbert claims by implication a monopoly when he assumes the name of "rationalist"; and your correspondent "Student" abandons the field of reason to him. I am one of the many who hold the traditional position, which achieves complete harmony between faith and reason, showing how reason precedes, accompanies, and follows the act of faith. Such a Christian claims to be as reasonable as any other rationalist. I shall not enlarge in your columns on this theme, which is dealt with in numerous works of Apologetics; but I must emphatically pay a believer's tribute to reason, the God-given light to our stumbling feet.
C.J.C. (Wellington).

DETECTIVE NOVELS

Sir,—I find it odd that your correspondent I.V.H.T. should be ready to pass judgment on a writer when he admits his failing to complete reading even one of her books. He is apparently one of the literary impossibilities who

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 24-25.

demand a masterpiece in every department of writing and in every book. I fear he has been taken in by the glib Edmund Wilson, who may be the great high panjandrum of critics but who, to my mind, places himself accurately when he states that prior to reading his recent collection of detective novels, he had read nothing of that kind since Sherlock Holmes.

My experience of literary critics, anyway, is that outside the particular type of literature in which they normally specialise, their judgment is as poor as their knowledge is incomplete. I think that Wilson talks tripe, suiting my language to his.

The current attitude of lofty contempt for detective fiction among some of the literati is a pose similar to that of the moviegoers who go only for the "characterisation and the photography," and a close relation to the musically-inclined who venerate Wagner but can't bear Bach. It will pass, as do all such pretentious affectations. Meanwhile, I remain a "Died in the Wool" consumer of detective fiction—and enjoy it!

GORDON INGHAM (Epsom).

Sir,—"Who Cares Who Killed Him?" you ask over a portrait of an American critic, Edmund Wilson. Nobody I should think.
ANON (Piopio).

2YC DANCE SESSIONS

Sir,—One of our comedians has said, "I stands for Bernard Shaw." Not wishing to be classified in like manner, the remarks which follow, while being my own particular views, will be framed in an impersonal tone.

The bands of Victor Silvester and Josephine Bradley have been described

by your correspondent "Anon" as gutless. Silvester's piano-drum-sax combination (later joined by the violin) does sound "poverty-struck" when compared with multi-piece bands, especially American, where showmanship and effect play such a big part. His band is styled a "ballroom orchestra" and as such has few equals. Tempo and melody achieve perfect harmony—neither is sacrificed to the other's advantage. To the swing-fan these musicians lack initiative, etc. They are in a rut—which is a very different thing from being in the groove.

It is perhaps, unfortunate that Silvester's recordings consist of solo passages throughout, which have a certain thinness. The same band playing in the flesh, at a dance, would not sound "thin" at all.

However, "Anon's" bone of contention is that he does not appreciate the music of Silvester and Bradley while he is having his evening meal or sitting at his fireside. It is a difficult situation. That is: the playing of music designed for dancing in an early evening programme presented primarily for the purpose of entertainment. "Gentle Annie" has that as the underlying theme of her letter. An entertaining dance programme for older folks would feature, perhaps, waltzes by the Orchestra Mascotte. Would the swing-fan be entertained? Perish the thought!
H. EARTY (Wellington).

FORESTRY FOR THE MAORIS

Sir,—May I congratulate Dr. Crompton on his letter on this subject. His carefully reasoned case is most convincing, and should compel the interest and the support of every true friend of our native race.
C.T. (Wellington).

MILITARY BANDS

Sir,—I notice a letter from "Bandman" (Wellington) regarding military bands in this country. I have no great technical knowledge of this band subject, but was under the impression that the R.N.Z.A.F. Band was a military band: i.e., includes wood-wind instruments, etc.

If such is the case your correspondent's statement of "failure to produce a military band owing to lack of good material . . . also . . . suitable conductors" would appear rather extraordinary.

On another subject, could you possibly inform me when, if ever, we are to see the film "The Great Mr. Handel"? It was in Australia over a year ago with "The Gentle Sex," which we have had the pleasure of seeing. — "STUDENT TEACHER" (Invercargill).

(We cannot answer our correspondent's film question.—Ed.)

PROGRAMMES

Sir,—At least twice a week at the breakfast session of 1YA, we have had inflicted on us a bracket of reputed orchestral items by David Rose—"To Spring" and "Our Waltz." When I bought records as I sometimes did without trying them, on the reputation of a composer, orchestra or soloist, and found I had bought a dud, I promptly gave it away; or if it was as bad as the one just mentioned, I put it in the fire. Nelson Eddy is a fine artist, but is there any need for his items to be duplicated on alternate mornings, also at breakfast sessions?

H. ALEXANDER (Auckland).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT
"Again Not Satisfied" (Kerikeri).—No application to anything we have said or printed.