

AUGUST 9, 1946

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A New Book

DELIBERATELY this week, and some readers will think perversely, we devote what may easily be New Zealand's longest book review to New Zealand's least popular author—nine columns to a book which has certainly not yet been read by nine hundred people. We are almost depressing enough to go further and say that if one per cent. of New Zealanders ever read it, that will be three or four times as many as its author dreams of in his most reckless moments. But we do not apologise for the review. To begin with, it establishes Mr. Holcroft as a creative New Zealand writer; one of three or four in a hundred years. In the second place, it honours authorship as an occupation. Finally it emphasises the fact that art begins at home. Mr. Holcroft might, as the review points out, have established himself in London. It is possible, though unlikely, that he might have achieved a success there that he would in the end have found satisfying. But he came back to New Zealand to complete himself as a New Zealander—to feel and think as a New Zealander and express himself in New Zealand books. The measure of his success is properly a matter of debate, but Mr. McCormick, who speaks with authority on that subject—we think with more authority than any other New Zealander at present has—puts it high. It is certain that it is an original success, that Mr. Holcroft is now neither an echo nor a shadow but a new voice, and that his accents are our own. Whether it is kind, or wise, to suggest that having conquered one mountain he should now attack another, only Mr. Holcroft knows. But thousands of New Zealanders now know that he is making us articulate, unlocking our minds and untying our tongues, and that only one or two others have ever done it before.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

A NEW ZEALAND COMPOSITION

Sir,—I welcome Mr. Austin's claim that his letter was a piece of musical criticism, as it proves the point expressed in my last letter. But the point at issue was Miss Pollard's composition, not the number of musicians known to Mr. Austin. In any case Mr. Austin does not seem to grasp the point that mere friendship with eminent musicians is no claim to being a music critic, for it is asking too much to have us believe that Sir Henry J. Wood (one of the greatest champions of modern music) would have concurred with L.D.A.'s well-known anti-modernistic sentiments.

The impressions submitted by myself were purely personal, and I am not concerned or worried by his. We are all entitled to our own opinions, and do not necessarily attack others in a rude and personal manner for not having complied with them. Music criticism, when attacking, should also be constructive—after all the true critic is attempting to assist the composer and encourage him in his creative work, not drive him away from it merely because of ignorance and lack of proper understanding of the idiom in which the attempt at creative expression has taken place.

A. D. HEENAN (Eastbourne)

DIPHTHERIA IMMUNISATION

Sir,—The following is taken from the British House of Commons Report, November, 1945: "In the first six months of 1945, 2,000 immunised children developed diphtheria, and 24 died."

How is this reconcilable with the Health Department's current propaganda, which states: "Immunisation does really protect. . . . In the rare instances where the immunised child contracts diphtheria, the disease is mild and non-fatal."

The people should realise that it is their own money that is being spent on this stunt: and it is a great pity the people were not told the whole truth.

FRED L. GARLAND (Auckland), and 33 others for whose signatures we have no space.

(The Health Department, to whom this letter was referred, points out that where large numbers of children are immunised, it is inevitable that a proportion of them will not complete the full course. "When cases of diphtheria occur among children who are said to be immunised it is nearly always the case that the children in question have not had the full number of injections recommended. They have in fact not been immunised. Death from diphtheria of a properly immunised child is exceedingly rare. The deaths from diphtheria in Great Britain dropped from about 2,500 in 1941 to about 650 in 1945, and during the same period the death-rate from diphtheria in most European countries greatly increased. The improvement in Great Britain is due to the large amount of immunisation carried out during the war years.")

CROSBY AND SINATRA

Sir,—One of your Viewsreel commentators, writing recently, says he cannot distinguish between the personalities of Crosby and Sinatra. I realise that even commentators cannot have universal knowledge, but Crosby's career can be divided easily into four parts:

- (1) His time with Whiteman's Rhythm Boys.
 - (2) On first breaking into movies and radio.
 - (3) His development as a comedian.
 - (4) His entry into the church.
- (1) and (3) gave him scope for his natural talent as a relaxed, ad libbing musi-comedian. Even your commentator

could not doubt the existence of this talent if he had heard an unrehearsed broadcast a few years back, when players were interviewed coming into the clubhouse after a golf match for patriotic funds. Crosby and Bob Hope had been round together. Hope was rather subdued, but Crosby was quite at home, cracking away in his best surrealist style for nearly five minutes. It was during this third period that the "Road to . . ." pictures were made, and it was during this period that he recorded with Connie Boswell and

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Johnny Mercer. This was the most encouraging stage of his career, and may be contrasted with (2) when he was nothing but the professional heart throb, and (4) when he entered the church in *Going My Way*, and has followed this up with what is apparently an even more shockingly vulgar film, *The Bells of St. Mary*. In these two periods he hit his all time recording low with "Adeste Fideles," "Beautiful Girl," and "Just a Prayer Away." Let us remember him as the gifted comedian rather than the spreader of sweetness and technicolour light.

Sinatra, on the other hand, was never a comedian. If your commentator offered himself in the cause of science, as I have done, by listening to the Sinatra Radio Show, he would soon find that out. Sinatra is strictly a business man. He is catering for a fairly limited market, and he must exploit it for all it is worth while he can. He works very hard, and occasionally one can hear the machinery grinding; this could never happen with Crosby.

Of Miss Shore and Miss Lynn, also mentioned by your commentator, it can be said that Miss Shore is a nice girl from Tennessee who could sing a pretty fair blues before Hollywood got her. (Hear her work with the Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street). Of Miss Lynn, I cannot say anything which would not be libellous.

G. le F. YOUNG (Cashmere).

NBS PRONUNCIATION

Sir,—I apologise for being insufficiently lucid regarding the pronunciation of "ack-sent." I meant to imply that it is pronounced here as if hyphenated, with almost equal stress on each syllable. Mr. Reed will find that, in any dictionary, the syllable "ak" is accented. In my letter it was not, and this was an omission. To illustrate my point I suggest that any who disagree should say in rapid succession, "frequent, decent, recent," and follow up quickly with "accent." It will be quite clear which is "out of step." The value of the "e" in "ent" differs according to whether the combination occurs in the stressed or the unstressed syllable. In the other group are descent, repent, detention, in each of which it will be seen that the "e" in the unstressed syllable suffers a loss of value. I may be out of step here, but that is because I had to adapt myself in England. Well-educated New Zealanders speak of hoppediddles, edjication, ishue (issue), New Zilland—and I repeat that this is just slovenly and without excuse. At the other extreme is that "naiceness" (to

which Mr. Alexander refers), which gushes hideously from a widespread inferiority-complex and which is almost worse. (Quite common in England, but not in the BBC). To add to my musical howlers I have this—Walton's Fakayde Suite!

H. M. BRACKEN (Auckland)

VITAMIN CHOPIN

Sir,—Why such large doses of this vitamin? Surely not on account of the orange shortage. I know it must be taken daily but didn't think it was necessary to quaff such quantities. In my case, such a large daily intake produces a sort of scurvy—the very disease it is supposed to prevent. The only antidotes are the meagre daily rations of vitamins Bach and Beethoven with an occasional thimbleful of vitamin Mozart (apparently not yet known to many). In the case of hardened addicts, such overdoses of this soul-searing vitamin Chopin result in a state of morbid sentimentality, leaving them completely unaware of the fact that a healthy life is impossible unless the diet contains other vitamins as well. Although probably distasteful to them on account of containing a certain amount of roughage, the Bach-Beethoven vitamins would prove singularly beneficial, as this group promotes not only physical, but also mental growth. If it has such a grip on them that ever increasing quantities must be consumed, the desired state of emotional stress could be produced in a more efficient and less gluttonous manner by trying the new synthetic vitamin Sinatra (a cheap American product), which is so potent that even small doses are said to make college girls swoon. If this doesn't work, try an ordinary lemon.

"BALANCED DIET" (Day's Bay).

PUNJAB

Sir,—I have several times now heard from the radio the pronunciation "Poon-jahb" for Punjab, or, as it used to be spelled, Punjaub. But the standard English pronunciation invariably used by Europeans in India (and in England), is as the latter spelling or Punjawn. After all, as the geography books tell us, the division of the word is panj (punge) five, and ab (ahb), water: "(The Land of) the Five Rivers." The pronunciation "aw" for "broad" a in the second syllable is traditional and has become fixed in most of the older names and words derived from Indian languages.

J.H.R.L. (Karapiro Hydro).

MUSIC OR SPORT?

Sir,—I feel that many people will bear with me in condemning the all too frequent practice of transferring a programme from a main to a subsidiary station in order that the former might relay unprogrammed features such as boxing, etc. The occasion I have in mind was at 9.25 p.m., July 17, when Holst's "Hymn of Jesus" was to be presented from 3YA. This feature was relegated to the local station 3YL whose transmission range precludes good reception from most of New Zealand. Although this country is well known for its interest in games of sport, is it too much to ask for a little "sporting interest" in music?

"PLAY THE GAME" (Dunedin).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

Angus O'Neil (Dunedin): Thanks, but scatology is not our long suit.