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Road Dangers

IT is easy to give good advice at the wrong time and issue necessary warnings too often. The wrong time is when no one wants to listen, and too often is when repetition produces no result but irritation. Both risks are taken by roadside advertisers who erect blatant hoardings in places where travellers want to enjoy the countryside. But it is not easy sometimes to know where to draw the line between tedious reiteration and silence, and that is one of the problems for those whose duty it is to warn motorists about this time every year of the necessity of driving with care. It has always been necessary to issue warnings, but it has always been dangerous too to issue them too often. This year, however, the road dangers are greater than they have been for several summers, partly because many roads are worn out, partly because most cars have worn-out tyres, and partly because it is possible for the first time for seven years to get unlimited petrol. There is the psychological fact, also, that it is now possible to relax after all the restraints and tensions of war, with the result that many sedate and careful people feel like turning cartwheels. It all makes the roads more dangerous than they have been for a long time, and it no doubt seems better to the authorities to risk the dangers of nagging if they can somehow or other drive home the daily risks of recklessness and speed. The wonderful work the Automobile Associations have done in sign-posting the roads, means that drivers don't often get into danger spots without warning, but the most a road sign can do is warn you that danger lies a few chains ahead. Safety requires that there should be warnings in our brains as well, and that is the justification for radio reminders, for appeals by the Minister and the Commissioner of Transport, and for this use of this column.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MOUNTAINS AND MEN

Sir,—John Pascoe's review of A. P. Harper's *Memories* won't do. His preliminary and rather old-fashioned review of the contents of the book may please most of your readers, though some points merit attention: (1) As a title, *Memories of Mountains and Men* should be stressed. Harper does not detail his expeditions; those have been related in the special *Alpine Journals*. Mr. Pascoe seems to feel a want, but the author writes round his title, which is preferable to such titles as "With Crampons in the New Zealand Alps" or "Unexplored New Zealand," though these may be selected by publishers to bolster up their blurbs. Nobody expects the *Memories* to have a "connected narrative." (2) A bad critic points to things not actually in a book. If he feels the need, why does the reviewer not set about editing Charles Douglas's diaries? Is the parody of the shanty part of the criticism? Did Mannerling and Harper actually agree to go their separate ways, one to the tops and the other to the passes? Is the survey of mountaineering history really so short and is there a better survey?

Though the reviewer makes no "individual explorations" he seems to smudge the canvas by going beyond his own personal reactions to the contents of the *Memories*. He is neither consistently disinterested nor wholly partial, but he seldom reads between the lines, and when he states that the *Memories* is not a great book he drops a terrific "brick."

The book has the tang of the horse and buggy days of New Zealand, when men pitted themselves against solid obstacles, when the differences between the sexes was more acute, and when love of the back-country could be expressed without sentimental puff. Harper has very definitely corrected the impression that Alpine Clubs are mutual admiration societies. Moreover, he sets out his *Memories* without dullness and with just the correct admixture of "comedy situations which afford the comedians the necessary opportunities to create genuine laughter." He has the clear mental vision of pioneering shorn of its absurdities, in fact, a way of living. This is in the text and "between the lines."

The elusive echo of the Hooker will send more and more men hurrying out to their bivvies, but it may be a long time before another book like Harper's *Memories* helps us along "the mountain way."

D. MACMILLAN
(Christchurch).

PUBLIC OPINION AND MODERN ART

Sir,—The article by Arthur C. Hipwell in a recent issue on the Exhibition of the Rutland Group, and his contention that sales at exhibitions are largely of the wrong type of picture has led me to write this letter.

The public in buying pictures take those which they like and no one can blame them for purchasing those which they will have most pleasure in beholding day after day on their walls. The pictures painted by artists for their own satisfaction cannot necessarily be expected to be to the satisfaction of the average purchaser. Here the artist must choose between the chance of sales and the pursuit of his own ideals and expression in art. The pictures illustrated in *The Listener* are in themselves the answer to their supposed (drawing an

assumption from Mr. Hipwell's opening paragraph) lack of salability.

The modern style of broad washes boldly painted does not lend itself to the modern dwelling. Such paintings require, to be seen at their best, a distance perspective of around 20 feet. The modern dwelling, especially the State house, allows of only one of ten feet with one's back against the far wall. Hence the popularity of the small etching in the modern home. Large masses of colour may be very well in a gallery, but New Zealand's few galleries cannot supply a large market. If sales are wanted some scaling-down in the size of the paint blobs is indicated. Far too many present-day artists strip their subject matter to the bare bones, bones often distorted by the crooked turnings of their subconscious mind or whatever else it is which dictates their approach to their art. Such efforts may be triumphs for

Election Chart Next Week

OUR next issue will contain an Election Chart for use by radio listeners in recording results as they come over the air on November 27. It will be along the lines of the Chart which proved so popular with our readers in 1943. As there is certain to be a heavy demand, subscribers are advised to secure their copies early.

the artist and tragedies for the purchaser. Our public may lack appreciation in the finer points and in its approach to art appreciation, but it will be a sad day when we accept present-day offerings as the ultimate.

Photography allows of artistic expression in composition and lighting arrangements, but painting through individual brushwork, inspired by mental attitude, allows of greater expression of personality. In the subtle expression of the feeling or the subconscious outlook holding him at the moment the artist expresses and imprints his own personality on a picture. Here lies his advantage over the photographer. It is in abuse of this factor that the modern school of art falls foul of public taste.

Like the modern novelist, they leave nothing to the imagination and their presentation savours too much of the flesh, insufficiently of the spirit. Here in New Zealand we have every chance to, and should, develop an art expression characteristic of our people and country, free from the cankers of older expressions, perverted in modern times. There is much room for development in art expression, but little room for exploration in lower or decadent forms. Art forms demand beauty and the expression of the spirit if they are to retain the description of art.

So if our artists must imitate foreign folly let their success or lack therein be their reward or punishment.

"BROWN SABLE" (Ohakune).
(This letter has been abridged.—Ed.)

WATER DIVINING

Sir,—Like Mr. Sutcliffe, I am a well-driller's son and also the grandson and the nephew of well-drillers. I myself operate drilling plant, but not looking for water; water in fact is a nuisance, a distinct hindrance to my work. If water will flow into a bore-hole, then, unfortunately my wash is able to flow out—and I want it at the surface. However, notwithstanding Mr. Sutcliffe's assertion that a bore located without the help of diviner has only one chance in a hundred, I find that unwanted water-bearing strata remain a problem. In fact, there are only a few formations in North Auckland in which one can hope to sink a 60-foot bore without striking water.

Incidentally, by experiment and practice I have learned to wiggle a twig with the best and in my opinion gorse makes the best divining-rod, however, the chief difference between myself and other diviners is that they believe in their mumbo-jumbo.

R. GILBERD (Okaihau).

Sir,—There are two faults in the argument of G.L.S. about the use of diviners by the British Army. First, what if it did use them? The British Army is not scientifically infallible. Secondly, there never has been any official dowsing unit in any British forces. Odd water-witchers have tried unofficially with negligible success.

So disease is caused by sleeping over running water! Either the evil rays may be diverted by chemicals (e.g., lead), or

More letters from listeners will be found on page 22

plants (e.g., manuka), or else the patient's bed may be moved off the evil spot! There is an interesting parallel in Maori lore. The old Maori knew that *Mate atua* (death due to supernatural influences) claimed many lives. In health he relied on the tribal Maori (e.g., the famous Whakatane manuka tree) to keep him well. For the sick Maori, "removal from one part of the country to another was a favourite remedy, the object being to remove the patient from the sphere of influence of the afflicting demon. The malicious *atua* was confined to a definite place." (Goldie, Trans. N.Z. Inst., 1904, p. 7). P. A. ONGLEY (Dunedin).
(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

MORE BEETHOVEN, PLEASE

Sir,—I listen to the national and sub-national stations, and I'm fond of humorous entertainment, talks, full-length plays, and classical music, and the only one of such programmes about which I have any complaints is classical music. I listen to 3YA, 4YA and 3YL mostly, and I can't understand the dearth of Beethoven's symphonic works; maybe there's a shortage of full or part recordings. Week after week passes and not a Beethoven (in full) symphony and yet so much of Bach, Mozart and Chopin, and others. I like them too, but I do believe if a census were taken Beethoven's name would head any list.

"CONSTANT LISTENER"
(Christchurch).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Pat Smith (Auckland): You have mistaken criticism of the film for criticism of the science. G.M. did not say that psychiatry was "phony"; he merely said that the way it was presented in the film might give the impression that it was. In qualified hands, it has, of course, had many remarkable successes.

"Runge Runge Atu" (Auckland): Point appreciated, but even cats must keep clear of party politics in our columns.