

not now commonly making that mistake. A like mistake is to pronounce the bad spelling "decade" as "decayed," perhaps stressing the first syllable, in spite of the similar words monad, triad, octad, myriad, etc.

I never heard "Co-vent." The variant is "Cuvvent"—and the "Cuvventry" so detested by the people of the place. Nobody ever pronounces Magdalen, Keswick, Harwich or Holborn as they are spelled, any more than they do One, Two, Dozen, or Possess. Perhaps "Argosy" should try Oamaru, Waitaki or Ngongotaha.

EDINBURGH (Cambridge).

Sir,—What some, at least, of the writers in your columns seem to have lost sight of is that pronunciation isn't static. A good pronouncing dictionary of the beginning of the century will disagree quite frequently with a modern one such as the *Concise Oxford*. A word in question is "ate," which is a bone of contention between "Homey" and "Argosy." In my young days the usual pronunciation was "ate," whereas now "et" is, or should be universal. Again to pronounce the "h" in words starting with "wh" is now deemed pedantic, though correct 30 or 40 years ago. There are many similar cases.

To my mind it is a great pity that the NZBS gives so little assistance in standardising pronunciation. Announcers themselves are often to blame for popularising incorrect speech (unfortunately the BBC itself is not entirely blameless). Professor Arnold Wall has done good service by his booklet and broadcast talks in pointing out some of the more obvious traps in speech, but he can't compel his listeners to follow his direction. I think a lot more could be done in primary and secondary schools to standardise speech, as we are in grave danger of adopting some of the ugliest of American slang words. I am far from claiming that slang should never be used, as much is effective and picturesque.

With regard to "Argosy's" complaint about the multiplicity of dialects in the United Kingdom, surely he realises that such variations of a common stock arose mainly from the lack of good communications until a century ago and are very interesting from an etymological point of view. Dialects should not be termed incorrect speech as they are merely survivals of an earlier mode.

R. S. W. HUNT (Tauranga).

(This is an interesting discussion, but it has lasted a long time. We must now bring it to a close.—Ed.)

OSCAR NATZKE

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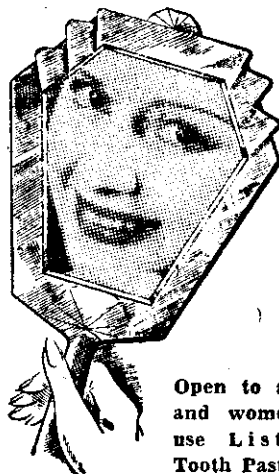
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