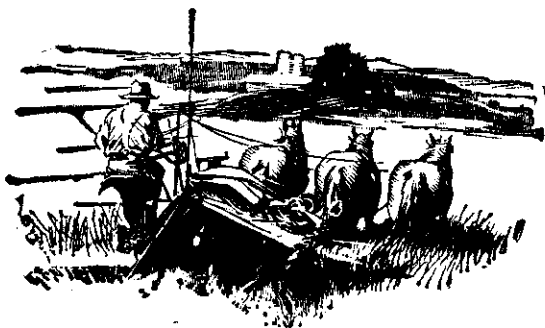


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And so the barber's off to find
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The Fetish About Foreigners

COLIN HORSLEY has come back to us after his successes in Britain. We hope Alan Loveday will do the same before long. Both have resisted temptations to belong to other nations. They have not called themselves Colinska and Lovedeskov respectively, for which we should be thankful. It would be interesting, however, if we could find out through a Gallup Poll what effect, if any, their retention of plain British names has upon the size of their audiences and their prestige. I am quite willing to lead off this poll with a frank confession. Like many other New Zealanders, I have been following Alan Loveday's career in England with

keen interest, but I cannot quite reconcile myself to the idea of a young chap with that name winning fame as a violinist. To a lesser degree a Colin Horsley as a star pianist seems against what we are accustomed to. Why there should be this difference I don't know. Perhaps it is because I have seen and heard Mr. Horsley, but have no direct knowledge of the work of Mr. Loveday.

I make this confession of set purpose. It seems to me to illustrate a state of affairs on which I want to comment. I don't mean I think it is impossible for a Colin Horsley or an Alan Loveday to reach first rank. I mean this; like many other Britons, I am so accustomed to leading players with foreign names and have so deeply absorbed the tradition of foreigners being superior, that when I come upon a British name I have to pull myself up with a slight jerk and consider the situation. There is something strange about it. The curious thing is that though I can view my attitude with complete detachment, that I can stand beside and watch myself "be'avin' like a bloomin' fool." I have not yet succeeded in getting rid entirely of this old prejudice.

I think this may be called snobbishness. Thackeray wrote a classic study of contemporary social snobbishness, but has anyone written a history of the malady? When did the movement begin that gave such a rank and reeking growth in the 19th Century? In Tudor and Stuart times there was plenty of class distinction, but not the snobbishness that we know. The country gentleman cheerfully sent his sons into trade. Chesterton saw the cause in "the refusal to take one side or the other heartily in the French Revolution." Others, I suppose, would put its birth in the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the middle class.

Cult of the Over-Serious

Social snobbishness is the most dangerous to society, but possibly it is less insidious than other forms, because it is so often pointed out and ridiculed. The complete historian of snobbishness should treat of intellectual and aesthetic snobbishness as well. The intellectual or aesthetic snob despises his brother of lower level (or in some cases merely different) pursuits and preferences. A

contemporary dramatist records that he offended his intellectual friends by writing a costume comedy. They held that he should have gone on writing plays with a purpose.

Possibly the success of the comedy had something to do with their attitude. This is the cult of the over-serious. The low-brow snob ostentatiously holds aloof from the intellectual. There is, or was, a cult of frivolity at Oxford and Cambridge. You affect to skim lightly and brightly over the surface of the most serious subjects. To take them seriously is bad form. I suppose the Pharisee might be called a moral snob.

The more or less blind worship of the foreigner in the arts is one phase of this snobbishness. Of the arts, music has been

the most productive of the condition. This, I take it, sprang mainly from the decline of England from her old eminence in music, and the fact that the great composers of later centuries (leaving out our own time as too near for judgment), were all foreigners. The Puritan element remained strong. English music became largely imitative, and the chief models were Germanic. Provision of certain forms of music was left to foreigners, just as in the Rome of the Empire it was left to Greeks. One may imagine a gifted young Roman saying it wasn't any good; the Greeks had all the prestige, and if he wanted to do anything he'd better take a Greek name. Among the English ruling classes music was something to be enjoyed if a professional supplied it, and that professional would be a foreigner, but for an English gentleman to take it up—well, there was the Prince Consort; he actually played the piano, confound him!

What's in a Name?

The great popularity of Italian opera and Italian operatic singers caused British performers to prefer Italianate or Latinized names when they thus professionalised themselves. Campbell became Campo Bello. Our New Zealand tenor Hubert Cart-er became Cart-a. If there was justification for this, one finds it in the success of Australia's greatest singer. If Melba had faced the world as Nellie Armstrong, would she have conquered it? Would we be enjoying "Pêche Armstrong"? Instrumentalists have tended to go to the Slavs for names. Ethel Liggins made herself a pianist and conductor of note, but it was as Ethel Leginska. Perhaps she kept the "Ethel" as a gesture to her native country. Alicia Markova, a leading ballerina, is Alice Marks, of London.

The richest example—richest because of its amusing yet serious sequel, is provided by Allan Foley, of Tipperary, one of the world's great basses in the second

(continued on next page)