

# Taste and Teapots

(Written for "The Listener"  
by ISOBEL ANDREWS)

HAVING read *The Listener* fairly thoroughly lately on the subject of Taste, and needing a new teapot, I went to town very conscious of Mr. J. B. Priestley and Mr. A. R. D. Fairburn, and determined to do them proud.

Our old teapot had been of a decently chaste design, biscuit pottery with the initials KM on the bottom, and it had a spout which poured but did not spit. It had been a teapot which, although quite suitable for companionable snacks in the kitchen, didn't disgrace the cypresses over the mantelpiece in the lounge. (They had been bought, I hasten to add, in those far-off days when £2/10/- for a Medici print was considered quite a lot of money to spend on Higher Things.) Anyway, we were quite attached to our old teapot, but it had arrived at that stage of decrepitude when a very delicate manipulation was needed to balance the lid on the ledge round the top. If you were not exceedingly careful the lid would fall with a plop inside the teapot, which didn't help the crack on the bottom one bit. When finally a dark brown stain started to creep on to the table whenever a cup of tea was made, we decided that, as quite a number of our friends really like tea, we had better buy a new teapot.

But it wasn't as easy as all that. Not after reading *The Listener* all those weeks. One had developed an aesthetic conscience, and taking an aesthetic conscience to town these days is simply asking for trouble.

\* \* \*

THE first shop had two teapots and a tall ladylike creature in black who overawed me immediately. One of her

(continued from previous page)

until he becomes a screaming persecuted paranoid. Add the highly improbable, unappreciated, misconceived, misreferred solicitude of a friend and a wife. For one whole hour—my friends were all driven to bed—I listened to the would-be auto-analysis or conflict between the schizoid ideas and torn personality of this genius-madman-painter until finally he pulls his scream world in pieces about his ears in a holocaust of mental destruction. At intervals there obtrudes a pastoral touch from the garden, then a posse of wood gnomes, who chant interminably and dolefully that here there is no joy and no pain.

But no, he has not merited death yet. He passes the crisis and lives to a ripe old age. How? As a purveyor and designer of ornamental gate-posts. One can only say with Harry Tate, "W-o-o-o-o-rds fail me!"

A. G. N. BRUCE (Silverstream Hospital).

## HEARD AT THE MIKE

Sir,—The other night from Station 42B I heard an announcer say "Richard Crooks was sung by Old Black Joe." Was this right or was it Joe's ghost who did the singing?

(MRS.) W. R. SELLAR (Dunedin).

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JULY 11



"The brown pot belly with rings makes quite good tea, but . . ."

teapots was pale blue with flutings, a posy superimposed on the lid, and a green leaf natively twisted to make a handle in such a manner that if you used a finger and a thumb in ever so dainty a way, and if the lid wasn't too hot, you just might get it off if you were lucky. This creation was worth, apparently £2/7/6, but I knew there was no one in our household dainty enough to cope with that lid, so, still wilting under the eye of the lady in black, I looked at the other teapot. This presented a welter of flowers of an unknown botanical species, it could have held two cups of tea if you were really anxious, was labelled Best English China and was valued at (to the customer) 35/-. As our friends who drink tea always run to more than one cup, and as I thought Mr. Priestley would probably not approve of the unnamed flora, I said I didn't think either teapot would do. The lady in black looked as though she had known this from the start and, after suitable muttered farewells, I found the door, humbly, and retreated.

The next three china shops had no teapots and looked surprised when I asked for them.

\* \* \*

THEN, slightly exhausted but still persevering, I found some teapots. Quite a variety in fact. There was one line in mottled navy with bulges and a spout which started to go up and changed its mind for 15/6. There was another in vague grey splashed with violets for 21/6 and there was a pot-bellied attraction in brown with rings of pink, yellow and black round the top for 6/11. I felt that if ever A.R.D. honoured our house with his presence and he was offered tea (if he drinks tea) out of any one of these, he would probably write an article about us and that this would be too much, so I continued the trek. When it was time to go home I hadn't seen a teapot that I felt would pass anybody's standards. I went back to the shop with the variety, looked at the navy with bulges, the vague grey with violets and the brown pot belly with rings. And I thought well, hell, and bought the one with rings for 6/11. It makes quite good tea. It doesn't look too out of place in the kitchen, so that all that remains for us to do is to sell the cypresses and replace them with an Italian lake, roses, and a leaning woman in gauze.

# LANDS

for

# BAGS

YESTERDAY-TODAY-TOMORROW

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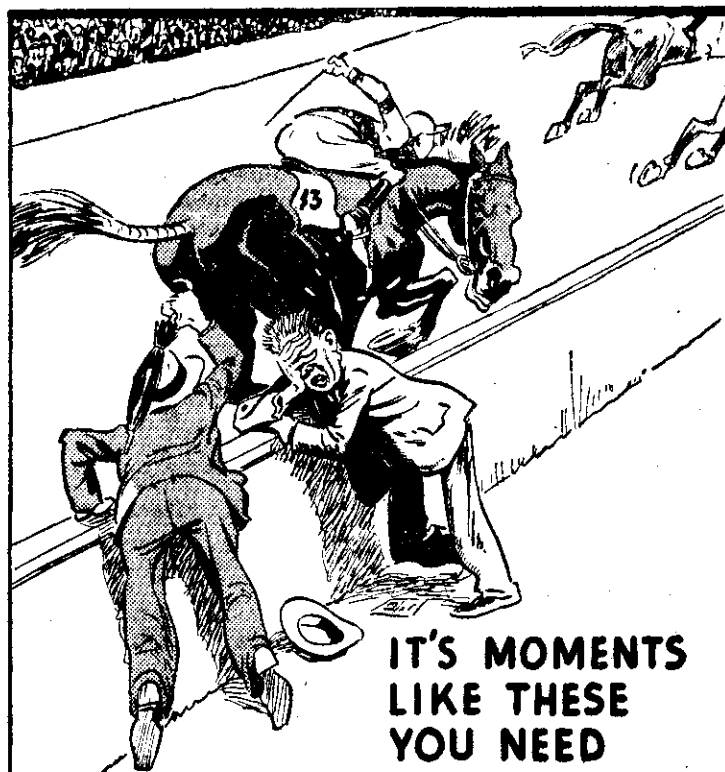
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