

SEPTEMBER 5, 1947.

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Prophets of Gloom

WE were surprised, when we began to collect the material on page 6, to discover how frequently the end of Britain had been forecast by so many of her wisest sons. The timid we always have with us, as well as the foolish and the ignorant; but it is encouraging to know that destruction can be announced by the wise and brave and still not arrive. We must of course allow for the fact that men can be sages in one field and simpletons in another; that the biggest men can be occasionally very small; and that miracles of recovery do sometimes happen. But when we concede points like those, and a multitude more, it is still cheering to reflect that Britain survived Cobbett, Carlyle, Wordsworth, Burke, Hardy, and Sam Johnson—to mention only a few of the doctors who at one time or another sentenced her to death—and to remember that recovery usually came quickly. It is true that the world has been more widely disturbed during the last few years than for a century or two, and Britain more severely strained. Until science came to their aid men were not able to do as much damage in a year as they can now do in a week, and if brave hearts quailed at the introduction of paper money or the repeal of the Corn Laws the same hearts must be thumping to-day. But the chances are at least nine in ten that they are thumping needlessly. The lesson of the past is that most of those who panicked died all their deaths for nothing. Britain recovered, Europe recovered, the whole world recovered—even if it was only to try suicide again. So, black though the outlook now is, modern history at least is on our side. Civilisations may have vanished. But the only civilisation modern man has known is in no worse case at present than a strong man in bed with lumbago, incapable of finding a comfortable position, and more than a little dubious of his doctor.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THRILLER SERIALS

Sir,—When the Wellington Housewives' Association recently requested "more suitable radio programmes because the majority of children listened to crime serials and not to children's programmes," they went too far. I know many who, like ourselves, prefer "Thrillers" first, and we also pay radio licences; we don't request the deletion of crooners, jazz and rhythm because we detest them; we realise that all tastes must be considered, though at the same time we believe these do more harm than anything else, in failing to elevate children's tastes. If parents cannot insist upon the children tuning to something else when a thriller is due, they lack parental control; this, and not thrillers and unsuitable films is the cause of child delinquency. One has only to see a young mother entering bus or tram, with a couple of children whom she tells to "go and sit down" to notice that by no chance is her order ever obeyed until she reaches a seat; so small wonder there is no obedience at home. It is absurd for these women to think that people are going to tolerate programmes limited to the level of children's mentality.

MORE THRILLERS (Auckland).

DRAMA FESTIVAL

Sir,—May I correct a small mistake in Mrs. Andrews's very interesting article on Community Drama? The dates of the North Island Finals are September 12 and 13, not September 20.

BEATRIX FRANCIS
(Hon. Sec., B.D.L., Manawatu Area).

DISCOVERING THE CLASSICS

Sir,—With *Great Expectations* we have more complaints from the intellectuals, similar to those complaints concerning the film *Henry V*.

These films, however, have certainly awakened my interest, and presumably of many more people like me. I have read *Henry V* twice, once before, and once after seeing the film. I am now reading *Great Expectations*, and intend reading more of Dickens, a thing I have not done since having *Oliver Twist* thrust on me at school. With the coming of *Caesar and Cleopatra* I am trying to obtain a copy of that play and more of Shaw's works.

To many people this type of film provides not only excellent entertainment, but also the incentive to go to the source, and improve their knowledge of the great English classics. Surely your correspondent W. J. Scott and others sharing his views should encourage these films if they are able to further adult education in this way.

M.M. (Wellington).

REPETITION

Sir,—Is it Field-Marshal Lord Montgomery's infectious example that has impregnated our 2YA staff with this passion for repetition? Or are they merely expressing opposition to the N.E.F.'s educational ideals and reiterating their belief in learning by rote and the efficacy of constant dripping? If the latter is the case may we ask what useful purpose is served by giving us from 2YA two servings of *Snatched From Her Lover's Arms* or *The Curse of Gerald Munnery* in the Old Time Theatre at a mere fortnight's interval, identical sessions with *Cheerful Charlie Chester* on successive Mondays, and

identical doses of *Call Yourself a Detective* on two different Wednesdays. Since the last of these disturbing examples was postscripted with an apology from the announcer it looks as though this practice is not the outcome of a fixed conviction on the part of the staff in the value of repetition for its own sake. For this we are thankful, since it looks as though we may be spared a third inundation. But we would almost rather be the victims of a principle, no matter how misguidedly held, than be forced to believe that our announcers are not keen followers of the sessions they themselves present.

M. BULLOCK
(Wellington).

WHITMAN TO MUSIC

Sir,—I have listened with interest to "Walt Whitman Suggests Sea Music" and now am looking forward with keen pleasure to "Whitman and Delius." Besides Delius, Cyril Scott, Holst and Vaughan Williams are all composers of Whitman's verse. The latest Whitman

More letters from listeners will be found on page 15

Music List, issued in November, 1946, records 295 compositions by 137 composers, and additional gramophone records. The Saunders 1947 "Whitman in Fiction" gives 80 titles, and the New York Whitman collector, Mrs. Sprague, has additional ones. In the Trimble Whitman Collection in the Public Library, Dunedin, we have "The Laurel Song Book," with three Whitman poems.

DOROTHY H. STEWART
(St. Leonards).

PLEA FOR BETTER MUSIC

Sir,—I often find it quite difficult to get any music that appeals to me, though I go from station to station. I like good music, but not always classical. More piano or violin solos, not so much orchestral music which is very good in moderation, but when you find six orchestral items on one station, and as many on another, and mostly jazz or crooning or very sentimental songs on the rest of the programme, you turn away in despair.

I do not wish to curtail other people's pleasure, but I should like on one station or another to be able to get something beautiful and soothing, satisfying, such as the simpler music of Chopin, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Schumann and many more. I do think that one of the objects in hearing music should be to educate us by giving us something to raise our thoughts and minds. I am not alone in my wish for something more appealing in the music we hear over the air; numbers of people have expressed their sympathy with me and we shall now be more

HOPEFUL
(Eastbourne).

SPORTS BROADCASTS

Sir,—On Saturday, August 9, I turned on my radio in the hope of finding some good tuneful music. The time was just after three o'clock. Station 12M usually has a good programme, but what did I hear? A commentary on some ball game. On tuning to 1YA . . . another relay, then 1YX and yet more shouting and noise. I tried Station 12B on the off-chance of a good session, but there was just 12B's usual noisy American programme. Surely two stations should

be sufficient to broadcast sports commentaries, leaving one station for "Boogie woogie," etc., and one station for popular semi-classical music.

"DISGUSTED" (Manurewa).

LANGUAGE OF THE DAY

Sir,—A new serial "Mr. Thunder" has begun from 3YA in the For My Lady session. It deals with the time of Judge Jeffries, towards the end of the 17th Century. Yet one of the characters in to-day's episode rebels against "living all my life in this dump." Dump? In the 17th Century? Surely not! The expression "on my own" is also used. While I am aware that light sensation is the primary consideration in many of these "historical" serials, yet the blunder of using present-day slang is surely a clumsy one, and jars upon the listener who is being asked to cast his mind back to events of long ago. It is just one of those silly annoyances that can so easily be avoided.

IRISH STEW
(North Canterbury).

SPOKEN ENGLISH

Sir,—Mr. Fairburn suggests that attention must first be directed to the children. I thought this was being done already. His remarks brought to mind an incident which happened many years ago, when a small boy rushed home from school, cheeks flushed and eyes blazing with indignation, "Mum, what do you think they are trying to make us do at school now?" "I'm sure I don't know, son, you'd better tell me." "They are trying to make us talk like the Homies." Then forming his lips into a perfect "O" he recited, "How now, brown cow." Seeing no answering indignation in our eyes, he realised suddenly that we, his parents were from the Old Country. Immediately his indignation turned to pity, and consolingly he said to his father, "Never mind, Dad, it isn't your fault you're a Homey."

E.G. (Auckland).

NEW ZEALAND VOICES

Sir,—The timely and stimulating articles and letters you have printed lately on speech, accent, and pronunciation could have gone a little further with profit to us all. What about New Zealand voices? After twenty years working in drama I find that the deterioration is progressive as far as clarity, audibility, and pleasantness are concerned. Children grow increasingly raucous, the male adult foggy and foggy, and female voice flatter and flatter. A teacher of speech production has stated that the prevalence of catarrh is responsible for the foggy and lack of resonance, and perhaps the nationwide use of artificial dentures adds to the flatness!

With this I cannot agree. And I take as exhibition, the radio sessions known as the "Boys Overseas," where the average voice is thick, monotonous, and unmusical until an officer speaks, when one gets a reasonably pleasing delivery, with musical intonations and plenty of resonance. Whether this difference is due to additional education provided by the secondary schools or to a more "refined" home environment doesn't matter. The fact that it exists is proof that all citizens of this democratic country can be trained to speak reasonably well.

JUDITH TERRY (Auckland).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT
L. Hawkes (Onerahi): Request referred to Station Manager at 1YA.