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Prison Conditions

WE have received a pamphlet* from the Howard League for Penal Reform criticising conditions in New Zealand prisons. It is not a violent pamphlet, but it is sweeping, and we are asked to give it the widest possible publicity. This we are quite happy to do, but publicity is one thing and praise another. The problem of the Howard League is to get uncoloured evidence; the problem of those who read its pamphlets to know what value to give them. In the present case it makes several charges, all of which are serious if they are true, but not one of which can be held to be proved. It charges prison medical officers with being casual and unsympathetic, and it is quite likely that some of them are; but it is not easy to believe that they all are. It complains that prisoners spend dreary weekends, and that no doubt is true; but it no sooner suggests that sport should be encouraged than it issues a solemn warning that games must not be made compulsory. Then it complains of the difficulty of "convincing the public that our penal authorities are making almost no effort to reform prisoners." The italics are ours, but if the complaint is well founded surely one reason is that the League has not the confidence of the public, or of a large enough section of the public to force the Government's hand. While it would be a bad day for our prison population if the League ceased to be interested in them—especially at the present time when most of us are too sorry for ourselves to be thinking about prisoners—it is a pity to see reformers turning querulous and sour. If the League can see nothing at all to praise in our prisons it should remember the lad who cried "Wolf!"

*New Zealand Prisons: Conditions Exposed.
Howard League for Penal Reform.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

WHO SAID IT?

Sir,—With reference to the question put by "Inquirer" in a recent issue, I can inform him that the quotation referred to appears in Voltaire's *Candide*. However, if memory serves me right, the quotation correctly stated is, "I may disagree to the death with what you say, but I will defend with my life your right to say it," a sentiment which, if acted on by everyone, would make the world a better place for all.

ERIC W. BRAITHWAITE
(Mt. Albert).

Sir,—The passage quoted by your correspondent in a recent edition is from Voltaire, in a work published in 1737, I think.

A. G. TODD
(Wellington).

Sir,—The quotation "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it," was attributed to Voltaire by S. G. Tallentyre in her book *The Friends of Voltaire* published in 1906. The sentence was widely quoted, but students of Voltaire were unable to place the original; Miss Tallentyre, although she had published the sentence as an actual quotation, then admitted that it was rather a paraphrase of Voltaire's attitude toward *De L'Esprit* by Helvetius, "Think for yourselves, but let others enjoy the same privilege." As the quotation is hardly a paraphrase of this, and because no similar sentence appears to have been written by Voltaire, it seems a fair thing to say that the author was Miss Tallentyre herself.

Much as I would like to say that I knew this all the time, I must admit that these facts have been taken from Stevenson's *Book of Quotations*.

W. R. MAIDEN (Wellington).

(Much as we also would like to say we knew this all the time, we must admit we thought our other correspondents were right until we received Mr. Maiden's letter.—Ed.)

NEW ZEALAND SPEECH

Sir,—I have been interested in the letters recently published in *The Listener* concerning English pronunciation. No doubt there are some people who do affect an inability to "pronounce evwy aa" but in some cases, especially children, the difficulty is a real one, and attempted cures painful, though seldom effective. Your correspondents do not remark another and frequent lapse, that of including R where none should be, as in the words Drawing and Laws, pronouncing them as Drawing and Lawrs or Lores. Perhaps the drain on the supply of R's by the latter offenders accounts for the shortage complained of in the first case.

The question of dialect is another matter. One of last century's greatest scholars, orators, and statesmen is reputed to have had a marked accent. Others might also be quoted besides W. E. Gladstone. What might very well be aimed at would be standard grammar, not uniformity of speech. I see the value of standard pronunciation in the production of plays, especially in those of classic character, but I think the world would be the loser if we ironed out speech to a level of an arbitrary nature. Who among us for instance has not enjoyed listening to the speeches of Mr. Churchill and also to those of Mr. Roosevelt? How different in form and pronunciation, yet who would desire to alter either in any degree?

The bane of the age is mass production: mass thinking and the regimentation of people into groups, political, industrial, social, cultural, wherein non-acceptance of some particular shibboleth becomes a serious heresy, punishable as in the case of the Ephraimites on a memorable occasion, because they, poor things, lisped a little.

RICHARD O. GROSS
(Auckland).

APPEAL FOR NURSES

Sir,—I read in my latest *Listener* an appeal by the Hokianga Co-operative Medical Service entitled "The Best of All Adventures." This appeal was timely, and for the most part well conceived, especially in its references to the poor remuneration at present offered to student and trained nurses, and to the necessity for order and discipline among the former. At the same time, I and I am sure many of the 300 male nursing orderlies and male nurses throughout New Zealand who may read it would like to ask the anonymous doctor what authority or reason he has for the statement he makes in the fourth paragraph: "That men could nurse is ridiculous, and physiologically impossible." Even if "physiologically" is a misprint for "psychologically," I protest. I fully realise that there are some forms of nursing which are unsuited to men, particularly cases met with in the course of district nursing, but the statement as it stands seems far too sweeping, and runs counter to the experience of many doctors, both in the army and in large civilian hospitals in our main centres, and also of some matrons and sisters who have the opportunity of evaluating the work of male nursing orderlies.

I am on the nursing staff, 10 in number, of a 50-bed hospital for chronic and incurable men, and I consider that the work is definitely unsuited to women, and particularly to young girls. We have no women as student nurses, but a trained nurse as sister in charge to supervise and organise our work. I notice too that the Medical Superintendent of Cornwall Hospital, Auckland, has asked his board to consider the appointment of more male nurses, for precisely this type of work.

JOHN H. T. CURNOW
(Ashburton).

WAVELENGTHS

Sir,—I think it is time the wavelengths of the New Zealand stations were attended to, as many are smothered by Australian and American stations. Some nights it is almost impossible to follow 1YA's programme, and 2YA is not much better. With the ZB stations it is absolutely impossible.

GEO. ROSE (Pahia).

(The Chief Engineer of the NZBS replies as follows: "In the selection of wavelengths for the New Zealand broadcasting stations every endeavour is made to select a wavelength which will give the greatest coverage with the minimum of interference. As there are more than 130 stations in operation in Australia, and several hundred in U.S.A., it is impossible to obtain a completely 'clear' channel or wavelength free of interference from stations in these countries at all times.")

CULTURE FROM AMERICA

Sir,—A notice in this week's *Listener* heralding the coming to New Zealand of an American violinist, Isaac Stern, catches my eye. The article, however, is devoted exclusively to the life story of a Mr. Hurok, the successful "showman" (your own word), for whose benefit Isaac

Stern is coming here. You tell us eagerly of this modest gentleman's ability to sell us what he can persuade us to want, and of his resulting well-filled waistcoat and wallet, and we are regaled with excerpts from the kaleidoscopic story of his chequered life, all of which, I must confess, leaves me in a state of equanimity bordering upon indifference. I was hoping to hear something of Isaac Stern, his art and his work, but beyond the brief news that he is to give some concerts here there isn't another word about him.

Moreover, at a time when we are enjoined to save dollars to help Britain, I consider your enthusiasm for the financial promotion of the culture-loving Hurok is mistimed and misplaced.

AREJAY (Christchurch).

(It should have been clear to our correspondent that our "eagerness," as he chooses to call it, was satirical. As for the dollars, the contract with Stern was signed months before the crisis developed. Finally, there was an article on Stern himself a fortnight before the appearance of the article which he says gives no information about the artist. Further information about Stern, with some details of the concerts he is to give in New Zealand, appear on page 9 of this issue.—Ed.)

WHEN CRITICS WANDER

Sir,—It might be said that a film critic is without honour in his own country, for his opinions are disregarded by the very people for whom he writes (the movie-going public) and scorned by the very people he criticises (the movie-makers themselves). But if a film critic should chance to wander out of his own country, as G.M. did recently in his article "It's An Ill Wind," he is endangering what honour he might be entitled to claim. The fact that G.M. may be a good film critic does not necessarily qualify him to deal with economics or international affairs.

How can G.M. logically justify the following phrases in his article: "The British producers' will-o'-the-wisp pursuit of box-office markets in America... the most cherished dream of Mr. Rank." "It is a good thing that British films should not capture the American market." "The prospect of earning big money in the U.S.A. seems largely illusory." "It is improbable that America would ever have permitted a large-scale invasion (by British films)." "Britain's economic crisis has put an end to Mr. Rank's risky and costly experiment."

There are a great many other unjustified assumptions in the article, but those quoted above may be taken as a fair sample. But perhaps they only appear fallacious. Perhaps G.M. really has inside knowledge of the intentions of American and British producers. If so he is too valuable a man to be wasting his time in this country. If G.M. really knows Mr. Rank's business policy so well, perhaps he will explain why he is so bitter in his published remarks against a man who has apparently taken him so fully into his confidence.

R. A. MCINTOSH (Auckland).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Anti-Boogie (Ngatimoti): The number of concerts broadcast depends on the number the artist and his management will make available. In the case mentioned in your letter only one broadcast was made available.

N. J. Cooper (Wellington): (1) Educationally yes, but difficult photographically. We give drawings in addition; (2) The National Orchestra does not include a bass-clarinet; (3) No offence to bassoon-players.

CORRECTION

The short story, "On Such a Morning," which appeared in our last issue, was wrongly attributed to Geoffrey Wilson. The author's name is Godfrey Wilson.