

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

"THAT SUMMER"

Sir,—Mr. Bertram's review of *That Summer* seemed to me intelligent and perceptive. In my opinion it was an excellent job marred only by the rather provincial localisation which it suggested in many places and proclaimed directly in others.

I would define the provincial localisation of which I have spoken as being, in the review, the suggestion that only Australasians . . . can appreciate its full virtuosity. Mr. Bertram is speaking of *That Summer*: He is speaking as though works of art may be turned up for all who read to see the trade mark on the base—made in New Zealand. Anyway, virtuosity is a danger-word in criticism. Whenever I read it I think of Louis Armstrong, sometimes too I think of Harry James. Would Mr. Bertram say that only a mid-west American can appreciate the full virtuosity of, say, William Carlos Williams. There is a similar sensitive use of what is probably a localised and hybrid idiom. This is not, unfortunately, the only instance where Mr. Bertram draws the geographical and provincial blanket over the very acute ears of Mr. Sargeson. My main grouse is that a temporary service in matters like these can readily become a dangerous disservice. A tag can easily grow into a millstone: if you allow me a platitude, stranger things happen in literary criticism than ever happened in Lewis Carroll. Finally, Mr. Bertram makes his point by saying: (The language, by the way, belongs to Auckland . . .)

Language? Language belongs nowhere. It is, in the hands of the serious creative artist, a purposive and non-restrictive instrument. In the case of *That Summer* it is an instrument used finally to uncover—and doing it scrupulously, surely, and finally, obliquely—the universal type, the Spiv.

There are no pre-ordained conditions necessary to the experience (in the reader) of serious literature. Ultimately there is only sensitivity. Sensitivity; the word is overworked: in my sense it approaches nearer to a disease than to a state of mind.

But I would say again that Mr. Bertram's review is an intelligent and perceptive examination. The sad fact was its necessary brevity.

However, I do agree with his remark: . . . whatever the outside may be, inside is New Zealand.

NOEL HARBRON (Auckland).

SOIL AND HEALTH

Sir,—After reading the article by Sir Stanton Hicks with the introductory remark that "We scientists, if we are worthy of the name, must not confuse the public," I am confused by his further remark about the "Present Japanese low record for malnutrition, and for infant mortality."

I have recently returned from Japan, where, for just under a year, my job was the engaging, training and supervising of Japanese labour—male and female—all ages, for the tasks connected with running a forces club (cleaning, cooking, gardening, serving, etc.). Those Japanese, and there were hundreds, tested in the pathological laboratory, were 99 per cent. diseased—the pathologist stated that further tests could easily show 100 per cent. diseased. Most of them suffered from boils

on face, neck, arms, legs or body; many had sore eyes; and many had been born with V.D. All my staff were underfed, hungry, and listless. I learnt to distinguish wouldn't work from couldn't work, and these couldn't work. It says much for their faith or fear that they showed such endurance when fighting. In the whole of the BCOF area there were evidences of hunger and malnutrition. A letter received from a club colleague last week tells of the death of the parents of a family of six girls and boys we employed. "Both died of acute anaemia and malnutrition."

So H. M. Helm amazes me with his statement that white women in Japanese concentration camps were able to do coolie work on a diet of rice. This creates a false impression. The word forced should be substituted for able. True, men and women did coolie work—I met two survivors of the team employed on the Burma railway, who told me that the record was one man dead for every sleeper laid until rations were increased.

P. ZIESLER
(Whenuapai).

NORMAN CORWIN

Sir,—You have given so much publicity to Norman Corwin and his work that the following extract from the *New York Times Book Review* might be of interest to your more critically-inclined readers.

"There is no doubt that Mr. Corwin is a first rate radio-craftsman. . . . Corwin knows how to put pieces of a script together, has a word-sensitive ear and great talent in the control-room. The sound he makes come out of the loud-speaker is very impressive. It has the power of casting a spell on willing subjects. To them, Mr. Corwin is a standard-bearer, broadcasting truth to the world. But the spell depends too much on artifice and is therefore fleeting. It probably never grips those whom it would do most good."

"ANTIBODY" (Wellington).

THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

(Solution to No. 359)

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TO the crossword puzzling enthusiasts among our readers we apologise for the absence of the puzzle this week. R.W.C. has been out of action for a few days, but hopes to be back in harness in time for next issue.

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