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Thomas Brunner

IN an article on Page 11 of this issue, written to commemorate Westland's coal centennial, Dr. G. H. Scholefield asks what the incentive was to exploration in New Zealand. In the case of Thomas Brunner the answer is clear: he was sent out officially to find land. The New Zealand Company had blundered in choosing Nelson for its second settlement, and Brunner was asked to look for further living space. That made him an explorer to begin with. What kept him exploring in the desperate conditions of his later journeys it is not so easy to say, but it was certainly not the hope of personal gain. The only reward offered to him in 1843 if he discovered "the immense plain (of Maori legend) in the interior, boundless to the eye, where there were birds larger than geese which killed dogs," was the honour of having the plain named after him. Whatever was promised, if anything was, before his most famous journey, glory seems to have been his only reward when he discovered coal. And glory came slowly to our early explorers. Tough though they had to be in body and in mind—some of Brunner's experiences, if we had imagination, make us shudder yet—they did not, like the explorers of early Australia, become historical sensations by vanishing into space. On his most remarkable journey, the one that the West Coast is celebrating this week, Brunner was certainly away from his base for 560 days, and given up for lost; but as a rule our explorers were back in a month or two whether they had succeeded or failed, and if they did not come back somebody knew what had happened to them. Nor was it only their own generation which failed to see them in their true proportions. They have received less than their due right up to the present time. They were big and brave and tough beyond all present-day standards, and nearly all of them were disinterested and of unshakable integrity. That certainly was the case with Brunner, who, if his name had not been given to a lake and a coal-field, would already have been forgotten.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

PAUL ROBESON'S SONGS

Sir,—Apart from the fact that when he comes on I go off—so weary am I of his singing—why doesn't Paul Robeson set an example to his fellow Negroes by elevating his own race? Have just heard again for the nth time, his by-this-time-grown-up Li'l Babby, in which occurs the insulting line, "All the odder Black Trash sleepin' on de floor!" And Robeson, today, heads a league for emancipation! T.L.M. (Feilding).

GILBERT AND QUEEN VICTORIA

Sir,—There can be no "super-abundance" of Gilbert and Sullivan in my opinion, and your contributor may well suppose that both of them indulged in parody of the best order; but Gilbert went over the line when he made his pirate king say:

There's many a king on a first-class throne,
If he wants to call his crown his own,
Must manage somehow to get through
More dirty work than ever I do.

That must have been the reason why Queen Victoria neglected Gilbert when she knighted Sullivan, but her more tolerant son lost no time when he was in a position to remedy that hardly royal neglect.

GILBERT FAN (Nelson).

"OF THAT ILK"

Sir,—In your issue of December 26 in the *Things to Come* items, you mention 2YD presenting a programme featuring Harry Gordon, Dave Willis and "others of the same ilk." Such a solecism may be ignored in the daily Press, but not in a paper professing to be cultural. "Of that ilk" means "of that same" used in connection with a man whose name is the same as that of his ancestral estate. It is permissible to say "MacLeod of that ilk" rather than "MacLeod of MacLeod."

I would, however, like the opinion of some authority to support me, as I am relying on my memory.

A.F. (Westport).

(Our correspondent's memory is a good one. This is what Fowler says in his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*: "Ilk means same, it does not mean family or kind or set or name. Of that ilk is a form constructed for the case in which proprietor and property have the same name; the Knockwinnocks of that ilk means the Knockwinnocks of Knockwinnock. The common misstatements of the phrase are partly unconscious and due to ignorance of the meaning of ilk, and partly facetious; indulgence in such worn-out humour is much less forgivable than for an Englishman not to know what a Scotch word means."—Ed.)

A LISTENER FROM ENGLAND

Sir,—Having come out from England recently, I cannot help but write to you about the poor quality of New Zealand's radio programmes. There are far too many bits, quarter-of-an-hour of this, and quarter-of-an-hour of that, instead of programmes arranged to last at least an hour or longer. It is the same with the plays—which drag on for weeks, instead of one good play lasting all night and finishing that night. We always had a play on one night a week in England, lasting all night. Of course they had serials as well, but never dragging on as they do here.

I love listening to the wireless. When you do not go out much, it is such company, but I don't like your bits of programmes. Also your *Listener* devotes far too much space to reading matter, and not enough to detailing the programmes, which are cramped into such

a small space one cannot read them properly. Could you not spread the programmes out more and detail them, making them easy for people to read and understand as the *Radio Times* does for the BBC. It is hopeless for old people to try to read the programmes at present.

HOPEFUL (Kaikoura).

(Our correspondent forgets that we have to do with one journal what the BBC does with three—*The Radio Times*, *The Listener*, and *London Calling*.—Ed.)

SPORT AND THE REST

Sir,—I should like to agree most heartily with "Hands off the Newsreel." The number of 6.45 p.m. BBC newsreels abandoned in favour of football broadcasts is appalling. Also what has happened to 1YA's afternoon classical hour? At this holiday time, many of us who merely gaze yearningly at the programmes all year, are now confronted with "Musical snapshots" or, and this is much more likely and much worse, interminable race broadcasts. Another major irritant is the unfortunate clash of attractive programmes on Monday nights from 1YA and 1YX. It surely isn't inconceivable that an admirer of Mozart's piano concertos is also interested in the BBC Brains Trust series. To make the choice even more difficult neither the speakers nor a selection from the questions in the Brains Trust feature was included in *The Listener* programme, on Monday, January 5. Surely it would have been possible on this occasion anyway to transfer the Brains Trust to 7.34 p.m.?

D.E.L. (Takapuna).

"STUMPS"

Sir,—For many years I have listened to the cricket broadcasts, and cannot understand why the term "Stumps" is used instead of the correct expression "Close of Play." "Stumps" always reminds me of a dental parlour!

"55 NOT OUT" (Auckland).

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE HISTORY

Sir,—I think any middle-aged person should have been able to acquire himself creditably in the history examination on his leisure reading. Beginning with the thin books in the Sunday school library covered in faded brown, blue, maroon and cheerful green covers, adorned with beautiful brightly coloured old-fashioned bouquets. These books vanished, giving place to uniformly bound volumes in brown and fawn published by S.P.C.K. At the same time there would be Children's Annuals, Mrs. Molesworth, Mrs. Ewing, W. M. Letts, E. Nesbit. Later came John Halifax, Mrs. Gaskell, the Brontës, the Kingsleys, Henry and Charles, Albert Smith, Dickens, the Findlaters, Mrs. Oliphant, Walter Scott, Charles Read, Walter Bessant and George Eliot. Later still Emerson, Carlyle, Arnold Bennett, Wells, Thomas Hardy, Zangwill, a few poets, Tolstoy, Gissing and multitudes of contemporary novels of every kind.

But the names are endless in a person's life-time reading, and why I make any attempt to list them is to show that all this reading (with negligible exceptions) lies within the 150 year period required in the history paper. Perhaps this period is being a little over-emphasised. It may be approaching old age, but when I seek sanity, I find it more

easily in literature from the 17th Century backwards.

No wonder the word "history" is being replaced by "social studies." My youngest son at dinner recently announced that he was going to collect postage stamps with animals on for his "social studies." When my Christmas shopping led me to a book shop, I heard two women discussing a recently published New Zealand book. One said that no one but a New Zealander would find it funny, and the other said it would be no good for social studies.

"STILL LAUGHING IT OFF"
(Dunedin).

LOCAL TALENT

Sir,—I thank you for the information about the 3252 broadcasts, good, bad and indifferent, by New Zealand artists last year. But I was referring to recordings. We hear those broadcasts only once. There is no repetition. No one could ever become a radio star here. Only musicians with trained minds and memories can seize on a voice once heard and remember it. To become a beloved personality an artist has to be heard over and over again by the listening public.

Have any of those 3252 broadcasts been worthy of recording? Would I be in order if I asked to hear one song again? There are a few among the many whom we would love to have repeated.

For instance, I was lucky enough to hear an Australian artist sing the Kookaburra Song from a Wellington station. It was delightful. Was it recorded? I do not wish to mention names, but the male singer in the programme said he was a New Zealander. I should like to hear a recording of the song he sang so brilliantly, one of Noel Coward's.

Please give us New Zealand recordings by New Zealand artists, instead of the imported records to which we chew our way through dinner, breakfast and tea. Let us hear our artists again and again until they become familiar to us. So radio stars are made.

Series of talks by the same lecturers are pleasant. We get to know the man although we are blind to the colour of his hair, and the fit of his clothes. Listeners are often lonely people. The artists we listen to become our friends. Please give us a chance to get to know them better. Repetition is a form of art. It delights the mind. I hope I have managed to convey my meaning.

Incidentally, is there no one on the NZBS payroll who can help us to laugh?

STILL HOPING (Feilding).

Sir,—On Christmas Eve we heard from Station 3YA a novel broadcast by a combination which I am sure all those who heard it will wish to hear again. I refer to "The Carolers" presented by a Christchurch vocal trio. The whole thing was most enjoyable—the various characters well and convincingly portrayed, and the musical numbers harmonious. Why go overseas for artists when we have such talent in our own country? I was one of a large party that night and we were all unanimous in saying that the broadcast was one of the best we had yet heard in New Zealand. It was suggested that I write to *The Listener* to voice the opinion of at least 15 people, who came from various parts of the Dominion—and two from Australia.

"OLIVER TWIST" (Christchurch).

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.
"Waylaring Man" (Auckland), "Tasworth" (Dunedin), and S.E.D. (Gate Pa): Controversy closed.