

# RETURN OF A NATIVE

NEW ZEALANDERS, with the assistance of their writers, have during the past decade or so discovered certain themes. Or, to put it in another way, they have elaborated certain symbolic types, or characters, who have come to play standard roles on the stage of our national life. There is, for example, the Exported Brain, who with a Byronic gesture shakes the dust (or mud, if you insist on being topical) of his native country off his shoes, sweeps his cloak about him, and departs into the mists of the Northern Hemisphere; to be heard of thereafter, from time to time, in all sorts of odd contexts—conducting a difficult operation on an Oriental potentate, writing a successful musical comedy, winning a Fellowship, or being ejected by the bailiffs.

There is the Marooned Islander, who is the victim of geographical claustrophobia, or of Anglo-Saxon schizophrenia. And there is the Simple Colonial Boy, whose sponsors are willing to consider nail-biting virtuous, and perhaps mystically significant of something or other, if it can be proved to be a specifically New Zealand habit.

I have noticed that just lately, since the war, there has cropped up in life (not, as yet, in literature) another character who has perhaps more interesting possibilities than any of those already on the stage; and that is the New Zealander who has been abroad for many years, and now returns to the half-forgotten domain of boyhood and adoles-

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cence, in the manner of the hero of Leonard Merrick's novel *Conrad in Quest of His Youth*.

If I sound satirical in referring to the Marooned Islander and the Simple Colonial Boy (and I think the dimension of satire must be added to them to make them more real and valid) I have no such intention when I speak of these New Zealanders who come back on a visit after many years. For they are usually people who have distinguished themselves abroad, and have enriched their minds with the variety of their experience. In offering the Return of the Native to our essayists and novelists as a new theme, I do so with the hint that there may here be found, not a character that demands to be rounded off with satire, but rather a handy measuring-stick to be used in satirising the other characters I have mentioned.

It is a great pity we cannot make more use of these expatriates. If, for instance, James Boswell could be induced to work as an art teacher in New Zealand for a year or two, I am sure he would provide a valuable fertilising (and corrective) influence. And if some of our scholars and scientists could be persuaded to undertake a similar interlude in their careers, we should be the better for it.

These reflections are the outcome, chiefly, of a talk I had last week with Guy Marriner, an ex-Auckland who

has established an important place for himself in the musical life of the United States, and is now back in New Zealand again for the first time in 28 years.

I find it difficult to imagine what it must be like to revisit the scenes of boyhood after such a lapse of years. It must be something of an experience, tracing out the paths that have been overgrown by time, trying to restore links in memory, looking at everything through a thick haze of other and quite different experiences. The strictly personal side of the native's return has obvious possibilities, in the way of what is nowadays called, I believe, "human interest." But I shall leave that to the novelists. And, in any case, we talked chiefly about music and its organisation; and about the New Zealand of to-day.

Guy Marriner went to King's College in Auckland, and to Wanganui College. (He has revisited both of his old schools, and given lecture recitals.) In 1919, for a brief period, he was aide-de-camp to the Governor of Fiji. He then went to the United States, and during the following 10 years ranged far and wide through America—working on the Chautauqua circuit, studying in New York, becoming a solo pianist, and seeing musical life generally. He made his musical debut in London in 1930, and then lived in Vienna for three years. Concert tours on the Continent followed, and then, returning to America, he made his home in Philadelphia in 1934.

Marriner is now Associate Director of Music at the Franklin Institute, and lecturer in the musical faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. Some idea of the work he does is given by this quotation from an article about him in the American journal *Commonwealth*:

Marriner's current (and seemingly permanent) role is that of musical propagandist and concert pianist and—judging by the steady amplitude and fidelity of his audiences—quite the most popular of which most Philadelphians have memory. Within his special realm he officiates, on Sunday afternoons variously spaced, at a celebrated scientific centre, the Franklin Institute, where adoring audiences flock to his tonic lecture recital seasons, begun in 1935 and continuing to date, with a marked curtailment in the war years. Just what the total attendance score for the 13-year period amounts to is something that may be left to a more mathematically inclined computer than the present recorder. The concert hall, arranged with a steep slant like a lecture auditorium and incongruously lined with murals depicting scientific discoveries, has fairly large proportions. Marriner



GUY MARRINER\*  
At Philadelphia, Iturbi and Horowitz also ran

used to give seasonally as many as 15 recitals. He now averages—because of other engagements and activities—eight or nine. When you consider that very few star pianists, save perhaps a Horowitz or an Iturbi, are ever booked for even as many recitals as two during a Philadelphia season, Marriner audience priority is possibly not to be matched, for a pianist, in any other musical community in the country.

Guy Marriner, like most visitors to these shores, is puzzled by our new-style long week-end, with all activity apparently ceasing for two whole days; is amazed to re-discover the beauty of the landscape (coming in to the air-port on a perfect spring day, he felt that the scene beneath him was "something not of this world"); and finds among some of the smaller groups of people he has met a degree of "international-mindedness" not paralleled in his experience.

"Everywhere I go," he said, "I find a hunger for music. And there is great talent here, among the younger people. But I ask myself what is going to happen to these keen musicians, and I can't find an answer. Can't something be done to give them greater opportunities? Many more of them should be able to go abroad and study, for instance. But the prospects don't look bright. It worries me to think of the undeserved frustration and disappointment many of them will probably meet with. Really, something ought to be done about it."

Guy Marriner returns to the United States early in September. But he is keen to pay us another visit as soon as possible, if circumstances allow him. He has had a pressing invitation to go to Australia, and perhaps we may see him back before long on a tour of the two countries. The big difficulty is his work at the University of Pennsylvania, which allows him only the long vacation as a chance to get away. But he seems determined to arrange it somehow.

\*Sketch by James Montgomery Flagg.

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that on non-holidays, in an England where everybody is expected to work, cricket grounds should be packed.

How much refreshment was used to keep things going? I asked one couple how many brews of tea they made. "Only one." "And you good New Zealanders!" "We had two bottles of beer and two gins as well." I hear of a party of men whose careful arrangements for the night included enough beer to provide drinks at frequent intervals. There is some doubt as to whether by five o'clock they knew which side was batting.

We've had our fun. If you can't see Bradman bat, or Lindwall bowl, the next best thing is to hear them. I have many

cricket memories. I saw Trumper make 87 out of 137 in an hour on the softest possible wicket, and another time, 293 in an afternoon. I watched Hobbs and Sutcliffe put on 150 for the first wicket in a test match. I was at Eden Park when Hammond hit three sixes running. I add to them that over of Pollard's when he got Hassett and Bradman. With Hassett, the commentator managed to say, "He's out!" before the crowd took charge; when Bradman went, the crowd, as I have said, beat him. I have never seen Don bat, but I have heard him go out. As the English yokel said when asked if he had ever seen Queen Victoria: "Naw, but I've an uncle who come very nigh seeing the Dook o' Wellington."

Well, here's to next time, which may be the New Zealanders' tour of England in 1949. The world will put these matches on a lower level, but our own men will be playing, so lights will be on all over the country (provided the matches are broadcast), and wives will sleep or groan and much tea and other comforts will be drunk, and heads will nod over desks next day. Who was it said life would be tolerable if it were not for its amusements?



"How many cups of tea were drunk during the voluntary vigil by the listening public?"