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Cruelty to Animals

BECAUSE we expressed regret that a correspondent who wrote about cruelty to animals had not written with more restraint a second correspondent wrote saying that we were not very observant, two more that we lacked taste, a fifth that our lordly manner was offensive, and a sixth that the facts were far worse than our first correspondent had said they were. What was said about ourselves may all have been true, but what was said about New Zealand was that it is "known overseas as having a greater percentage of cruelty to animals than any other English-speaking country . . . that whereas in England and Scotland an owner of an animal attends to its wants before his own, in New Zealand the reverse is the rule . . . that horses are starved to death, dogs chained up year in year out without being released . . . cats mutilated, dumped, or tied up in sacks, and left to die miserably" . . . and some other things almost as ridiculous. We printed the letter because the writer was obviously sincere, had been deeply moved, and had raised her voice in a good cause. If we refer to it again it is because the cause is still good and the arguments of most of her supporters as extravagant and foolish as her own. Whether we are more or less cruel than the people of other English-speaking countries is something that none of us can know. What we can know is that New Zealanders live largely by rearing and then slaughtering animals, and that if the percentage so situated is greater than in other English-speaking countries the need for guarding against callousness must be greater too. It is necessary to keep this fact continually in our minds, and good to be reminded of it if we seem to be forgetting it. But it is neither helpful, nor sensible, nor sane to suggest, when some callous scoundrel starves a horse or ill-uses a dog that all New Zealanders do such things, or any appreciable number of them. It is hysterical nonsense which gets in the way of more sensible pleadings.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Sir,—I largely support "Sanctuary's" letters re cruelty to animals in the Dominion and deplore your contentious remarks in your footnote, for they show you to be singularly unobservant and misinformed on the subject as well as displaying poor taste.

The mention of cruelty to animals (this latter term includes, of course, *Homo sapiens*) opens up a wide field for reflection by thinking people to-day and is a moral issue which will have to be tackled sooner or later if we desire, as a species, to advance at all. I doubt, however, whether "Sanctuary's" statement that New Zealand tolerates a larger percentage of cruelty to animals than any other English-speaking country would stand critical examination. We lack here the fox and tame stag hunting so prevalent in the United Kingdom and the racial intolerance and even hatred of coloured peoples as in South Africa and the U.S.A.

However, neglecting the debatable and widespread practice of vivisection, we must face the unpleasant fact that we (the British people) are a cruel nation. Bernard Shaw points out our habit of disguising our vices by giving polite names to the pastimes of sacrificing animals in various cruel ways in the name of sport, fashion, education and discipline. I do not believe that a boy intends to be cruel when he robs a bird's nest; rather is his action merely a reflection of the superstitiously cruel routine under which he was brought up and to which he has become accustomed. "Let cruelty or kindness or anything else once become customary and it will be practised by people to whom it is not at all natural, but whose rule of life is simply to do only what everybody else does, and who would lose their employment and starve if they indulged in any peculiarity."

L. R. ALLEN (Rotorua).

Sir,—May I say that the letter by "Sanctuary" was, if anything, excessively moderate in tone. The attitude of the majority of New Zealand people towards animals is, if not deliberately cruel, at least callously indifferent—which is somewhat strange in a country deriving by far the greater part of its income from animals or animal products. The standard of animal husbandry, while considerably better than it was 20 years ago, is very low indeed, and I doubt if it is lower in any civilised country in the world. I can think of no other place in which the "bobby calf" trade as practised here would be tolerated for a moment.

May I say that I am a man, neither squeamish nor sentimental, that I have had over 30 years' adult experience with large numbers of domestic animals. It is high time the young New Zealander was taught that he has obligations towards other living creatures from whom he derives his very high and comfortable living standards.

EX-COCKY (Tauranga).

Sir,—"Sanctuary" voices the deep feeling of so many of us that I must thank her for her letter and you for publishing it in your issue of December 24. But I must take exception to your footnote in which you state that the writer hysterically exaggerates her facts. These things have happened too recently

in Auckland to be denied. Cruelty to the human family often follows closely on cruelty to the dumb creation and so the vicious circle is completed. Let us teach our children the divine law of love to all manifestations of life. I may mention that a good definition of this love is active goodwill.

FRANCESCA (Auckland).

OLD VIC FAREWELL

Sir,—May I, as a member of the management of the Old Vic tour, settle the question which seems to have arisen as to the voices of Rhett Butler and Elizabeth Bennett in the Olivier farewell broadcast.

I am afraid it is your correspondent Mr. Fisher and not your *Viewsreel* commentator whose ear is at fault. The voices *did* belong to Sir Laurence and Miss Leigh, who played all the parts in the episodes heard in the broadcast, even though some of those parts had been portrayed by other actors on the screen.

M.H.D. (Christchurch).

BAND RECORDS

Sir,—What has become of all those lovely records that once delighted so many listeners—mandolin and banjo bands, piano accordion and marimba bands, steel guitar, accordion, concertina, xylophone, piccolo, flutes, etc.? Too much of the music we hear now is orchestral, till one gets sick and tired of the confounded thing. And why is there so much talk with music? Most of us hear more than enough talk without listening to the composer's pedigree. Who cares when they were born, where they were born, how long they lived, when they died, where they died, and who went to their funeral?

Why not give the old-time listeners an instrumental programme one evening a week, and cut out some of the talk and serials.

ONE FOR ALL (Island Bay).

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Sir,—Having heard quite a lot of Christmas carols on Christmas Day sung in a lusty and hearty style by the BBC Choir, I was disappointed at the Christchurch effort at 11.0 a.m. from 3YA. I thought it affected and elocutional to avert the natural flow of sound at commas, etc., and out of keeping in such music. I have always thought that good singing should be like good speaking. If this method of diction is the correct technique, then it may be tolerated perhaps in certain music but not in good old hearty carols.

NO STOP AFTER "COME"
(Christchurch).

MODERN ART

Sir,—M. T. Woollaston's "My Mother" happens to be my youngest sister. One day when M.T.W. put "it" against the wall without comment, for me to look upon, and then told who it was supposed to be, I was at first speechless with horror. Then words flowed out brook-like "but much mud-died. . . . Oh yes, I was scathing, for that morgue-like creation was supposed to be my beautiful sister. Then the miracle happened. Out of that dreadful thing of ugly lines stepped my sister as I knew her, alive, beautiful, and reflecting her living vitality for me to look upon. It was only there for a

moment then was gone again. This happened three times within approximately one hour. Yes that reality haunted me for about three years. I am now able to see her anytime I look at it—but oh, those ugly lines are still a trial till I see the beauty through them.

UNCLE FRANK (Tauranga).

RACING BROADCASTS

Sir,—I willingly pay my taxes. I get good value for them. I willingly pay my radio licence fee. Enough of the programme interests me and I quite see how extraordinarily difficult it must be to construct satisfactory programmes.

I can tolerate a symphony being interrupted while we cross to a wrestling match. I can even understand that one can hear a Bach Toccata and Fugue being played, and immediately after, the announcer saying "The time is now 8.15 and we begin our programme *For the Music Lover* with a rendition of Ketelby's 'In a Persian Market'." I can forgive the lady narrator who mentioned "A Goitre Festival," in honour of the greatest of German poets. But I am puzzled about one matter.

Maybe I am just dumb and there is some simple answer. The question is the ethics of race broadcasting. I am no wowser and I don't mind anyone going to the races. But who are the broadcasts for? It seems to me that the willing audience must consist of three sorts of listener. Firstly a small number who cannot attend the races but who have friends there placing bets for them. Secondly there will be bookmakers noting results. Thirdly there will be a large number of people who bet through bookmakers—that is, as the law stands, illegally. I am not concerned with the rightness or wrongness of the law about bookmaking; it is to be reconsidered, I believe. What I am puzzled about is just this: Should the State spend its money—that is your money and my money—providing information which is mostly for the benefit of persons who are not acting according to the laws of the State?

Let us have laws, as few and as good as possible, but for heaven's sake let the State stand by them and not connive at the breaking of them. The logical extension of such condonation is anarchy and general contempt for the law. Or am I being unreasonable?

J. PISTOL
FOR SHALLOW AND SILENCE
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW
(Pipikaretu).

A PROTEST

Sir,—The NZBS has a fine record, and my husband and I have often remarked on the quality of their productions; but surely they must be very short of radio plays to use such a one as *Fly Away Herbert*. It is not even amusingly silly. Its theme song should have been "Beer, beer, glorious beer," but instead, words of Scriptures were used in that glorious song, "O For the Wings of a Dove." This surely merits a protest, being, apart from its irreverence, very poor taste.

RUVE (Wanganui).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Eighty (Ngongotaha): The problem is under constant review.
Oh to be in Essex (Te Uku): Examination of the programmes makes your letter a mystery.
Ronald Castle (Wellington): We do not print circular letters.
M. H. Innes (Marion): We are sorry to disappoint you, but we can't undertake to supply the gaps in serials which listeners miss on the air.