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Over the Yangtse

THE crossing of the Yangtse by the Chinese Communists will perhaps induce the democracies to do some realistic thinking. It is not realistic to say that the troubles of the Communists will now begin; that they will not be able to feed their armies or control them; that their lines of communication will be stretched to breaking point; and that they are not Communists anyhow. It is not even wishful thinking to interpret the situation like that. It is not thinking at all. Nor is it sufficient to see that this may be one of the great disasters of history. We should all see clearly that the Communists have only revealed the disaster. They crossed the Yangtse because there was nothing to stop them; neither courage, nor competence, nor leadership, nor integrity. The disaster began when bribery, corruption, and incapacity defeated the attempts of the reformers and patriots to remake China and clean it up; and that was not this year or last. We are all blind some of the time; but we don't have to go on being blind all the time, and deaf and stubborn too. It is not months but years since American and British correspondents began urging us not to deceive ourselves any longer about China—denied most of the woolly nonsense still in circulation about a Chinese democracy and warned us about the showdown that has now come. But most of us took no notice. Even when the United States stopped sending war material—washed its hands of China in the sight of the whole world—only a few woke up. Now our technique is to say that China will not prove a springboard for Communism but a bog. This may in fact prove true; but it is time to realise that bogs can be drained and made firm and that moonshine will support nothing at all.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MAY 6

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

TROLLOPE ADAPTED

Sir,—A word of congratulation for your masterly footnotes to letters, for your inimitable skill in confuting correspondents who incautiously believe they have caught you napping, is long overdue. Recent examples are your footnotes to R. L. Andrews and J. R. Jennings. Hardly daring to hope that I shall be more successful than others, I somewhat hesitantly draw your attention to a footnote to my letter headed as above, in which your previous reference to Squire Dale as Lily Dale's father remains unanswered. However, should you really be bowled out this time you will be in good (or to my mind in bad) company, for to cite an example in the radio adaptation, the villain of the tale, Adolphus Crosbie, appears to have been gratuitously "adapted" out of existence and replaced by an entirely new character, one "Rick" Crosbie. I have no criticism to offer as to the entertainment value of the production, but think the extent to which adaptation has been carried must be a disappointment to Trollopians.

A. H. REED (Dunedin).

RADIO ADVERTISING

Sir,—Regarding "Buyer Beware's" letter on radio advertising, there is no doubt that when this type of advertising first came over the air it was a sensation. Grocers will remember a certain tonic food which had hung fire for months selling like hot cakes. But the thing is now overdone. To-day when you ask a customer what tea she would like the reply is very often "It doesn't matter—they are all the same." In which case she gets the line showing the greatest profit to the retailer.

Radio advertising has become a dull and dreary business, and an announcer could be forgiven if he suddenly screamed "Take a dose of Epsom Salts—it would do you far more good than Blank's Bilge at 4/6 a pop." In the olden days when newspaper advertising

was paramount a short slogan was effective. Many will still remember such slogans as "Every picture tells a story," "Won't wash clothes," "Pink pills for pale people." To-day your innards are taken out and dissected by the Dragemoff Drug Coy. in such a way that you end up with a bellyache if you didn't have one to start with.

At popular hours you are compelled to listen to one minute of advertising to one minute of music. You are listening to a thrilling play and just when the hero is pressing his lips tenderly to hers the sponsor chips in with a few well-chosen words on halitosis. Well, see you, why listen to the Commercial? Frankly I think it is the personal touch or that breezy manner that appeals even if they sometimes stir up a wasp's nest. Just imagine "This is the weather office" being toned up a bit. For "fair to fine weather" a little light trilling on the piano accompanied by birds twittering, and for "dull and overcast" a thundering on the keys and crashing of glass.

I do not wish to condemn radio advertising entirely. It is an excellent way of putting over a new line, but advertisers should co-operate with the retailers before launching a new campaign. Often we are asked for a line we have never heard of, then are told by an amazed customer that "it has come over the air" as if that settled everything. Many "dud" lines are just put over on the principle that there is one born every minute.

E. C. RUSSELL
(New Plymouth).

FOOD FOR BRITAIN

Sir,—In *The Listener* of March 11, under the heading "Britain's New Villages," appeared the following words: "Britain is not growing enough food or timber for her population, and major steps are being taken to remedy these deficiencies." A fortnight earlier the New Zealand newspapers featured a report from London to the effect that, owing to the poor demand for vege-

tables at the markets, farmers were compelled to plough in the bumper crops produced by warm weather during February, over £1,000,000 worth of vegetables being thus destroyed in East Anglia alone.

So I ask, Sir, what are we to believe? On one hand we read that Britain cannot grow enough food, and on the other that good food there is being destroyed because nobody wants it.

L. D. AUSTIN

(Wellington)

(Both could be true.—Ed)

"ON THE HOOKS"

Sir,—Sam Cairncross has two main attributes which I admire greatly and which are too rarely found in New Zealand artists, and they are, stimulating energy and drive. "On the Hooks," which appeared in a recent issue of *The Listener*, is a clear proof of these attributes, but it also shows even more clearly than did the reproductions of his work in the 1947 *Year Book of the Arts*, that the artist is still so concerned with the laying of paint on canvas that he has not as yet found time to be himself. If an artist is lacking in original thought and imagination, or, as Mr. Woollaston rather mysteriously likes to express it, "inner vision," his painting can scarcely be reviewed as something pretty important in contemporary art.

Much that has been published concerning Mr. Cairncross and his work has only succeeded, I fear, in misleading the general public. The many readers who are searching for some criterion on which to make a reasonable assessment of the qualities of a painting, or who are trying to find what to look for that is worth while amidst this rather confusing "new movement" in art, are being led into the belief that here is an artist who has "arrived" whose paintings must be new, vital expressions of an original genius. It is not unnatural that many have gained this distorted view considering the height of the pedestal to which Mr. Cairncross has been elevated by certain publicity.

It is doubtful whether he has been misled in the same way. I certainly hope that he has not.

D. J. RAMAGE (Wellington).

Sir,—I was most interested in the reproduction of a freezing works study, "On the Hooks," by Sam Cairncross, which appeared in *The Listener* for April 1, particularly because of its resemblance to Rembrandt's "Flayed Ox." Could this be intentional on Mr. Cairncross's part or merely a coincidence?

VINCENT (Wellington).

ORCHESTRA AT REHEARSAL

Sir,—Lovers of orchestral music may discover every Wednesday evening a most instructive and entertaining half-hour by tuning in, on short wave, to Station KRHO, Honolulu, on 15.25 megacycles in the 19-metre band. From 9.30 to 10.0 p.m. this station puts on a rebroadcast from U.S.A. of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the conductorship of Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, at an actual rehearsal. The conductor's remarks and corrections, his praises or sarcasms, on the whys and wherefores of the various passages, as rehearsed, all add to the novelty of this unusual broadcast.

SHORT WAVE (Wellington).

OPERA SEASON EXTENDED.

INSTEAD of sailing for Australia on May 20, the International Opera Company will now travel by air, leaving Auckland probably on June 3 and 5. This extension of the season by about a fortnight means that there will be opportunities for thousands more people to see and hear a variety of works. Dates for the Timaru season and the early part of the Dunedin season have been re-arranged, and so, in turn, have dates of opera broadcasts by the NZBS.

Timaru will hear "Madame Butterfly" this Friday, May 6, and "The Barber of Seville" (matinee) and "La Bohème" on Saturday, May 7. The evening performances on May 6 and 7 will be broadcast.

Dates and operas for the Dunedin season will be:—Monday, May 9, "Madame Butterfly"; Tuesday, May 10, "Aida"; Wednesday, May 11, "La Bohème"; Thursday, May 12, "Madame Butterfly" (matinee), evening, "Aida"; Friday, May 13, "Tosca"; Saturday, May 14, "La Bohème" (matinee), evening, "Rigoletto"; Monday, May 16, "Manon"; Tuesday, May 17, "Rigoletto"; Wednesday, May 18, "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci"; Thursday, May 19, "Madame Butterfly" (matinee), evening, "The Barber of Seville"; Friday, May 20, "Il Trovatore"; Saturday, May 21, "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci" (matinee), evening, "Manon". There will be broadcasts of the evening performances only on May 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, and 21.

In Invercargill all three performances, "Madame Butterfly" on Monday, May 23, "Manon" on Tuesday, May 24, and "The Barber of Seville" on Wednesday, May 25, will be broadcast.

The return season in Wellington will re-introduce "Il Trovatore" on Friday, May 27, and "Rigoletto" (matinee), and "Manon" on Saturday, May 28. "Manon" will be broadcast.

The final New Zealand performance by the company will take place in Auckland, where the dates and performances will be:—Monday, May 30, "Madame Butterfly"; Tuesday, May 31, "Il Trovatore"; Wednesday, June 1, "Madame Butterfly" (matinee), evening, "Rigoletto"; Thursday, June 2, "Manon". Performances on May 31, and June 1 and 2 will be broadcast.