

## MODERN ART.

Sir,—The 12B Citizens' Forum discussion on modern art, broadcast on October 1, was interesting if for no other reason than that the two "ordinary people" seemed to have a broader knowledge of the subject than the two "experts." (In fairness I note that the experts did not formally claim that distinction, though they gave the impression of assuming that they knew more about the subject than the laymen.)

One of the experts made much play of the fact that people once roared with laughter and exploded with invective when confronted with the works of Gauguin. This, to me, proves nothing, for people laughed at the works of hundreds of other artists besides Gauguin, and in 99 of each 100 cases they were right, and only in isolated instances (as with Gauguin) were they wrong. Therefore, how can the 12B experts (who admit that they do not understand Picasso's *Wounded Bird*) be certain that Picasso is a great artist, and heap scorn on the laymen who frankly admit that, because Picasso conveys nothing to them, Picasso may not, after all, be as great as the experts would have us believe?

Time alone will tell whether it is the experts or the laymen who are right, but in the meantime we should not forget that perhaps Picasso did not mean his *Wounded Bird* to be taken seriously, and that it might have been his intention to observe how many "arty" people he could delude while he concentrated on formalism, to which he has now returned after his years spent producing experimental pictures.

In conclusion, might I congratulate the laymen of the forum on injecting the first piece of humour I have heard in these sessions?

JACK THORNTON (Upper Hutt).

Sir,—In my opinion the speakers in the 12B Forum discussion on modern art did not get to the core of their subject. While Picasso, Marc Chagall, Miro and the rest of their tribe use an abstract, indefinite, individualistic "impression," they relate that impression to a definite idea of a reality which is intelligible to everybody. Picasso, for example, paints a series of somethings which he claims represents impressions that are his personal reactions to a certain reality. He then relates those impressions, which he alone can understand, to that reality and calls his impressions, "A Wounded Bird"—to which the common understanding of reality retorts that it is no such thing!

The only logical method for this modern art to adopt is to relate the painters' impressions to the language of some of the impressionist "new" writers, and to exhibit the joint works in mental hospitals, which are national institutions devoted solely to individual impressionism.

ARTHUR CLARK (Taupaki).

Sir,—Following the discussion on modern art, as conducted by the 2B Citizens' Forum, I would like to congratulate one of the speakers for his courageous and common-sense stand. The gentlemen who extolled Picasso's fantastic *Wounded Bird* as an original and beautiful work of art were satisfied that the ordinary Philistine could not be expected to understand or appreciate it. Why then, in the name of common-sense, should the artist go to the trouble of perpetrating a work of art merely expressive of his own peculiar thought-processes for the purpose

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of exhibiting it to ordinary people to whom he knows it must be an enigma?

It is my contention that this so-called new art, which is the most ancient of all arts, dating back to the cave-drawings of primitive man, is just a gigantic bluff on the part of artists bored with the accepted canons of art. It is a hoax on those gullible patrons of art who are willing to be instructed as to what they must admire and who feel immensely superior in their pretence of finding beauty and significance in the hideous and obscure. It is the outcome of the eternal quest for "something new under the sun" with which to startle, shock and amaze jaded mental appetites, and it is so old that it can be passed as new. The worst feature of it is that the artists themselves are so skilled that they can with diabolical cleverness present their travesties with such richness of colouring and technique that even the most sane of us is tempted to believe that the thing is genuine and that perhaps we are lacking in perception. But do not be deceived or misled. Trust in your common sense. Believe your eyes. This, too, will pass.

ISABEL M. CLUETT (Auckland).  
(Abridged—Ed.)

## "EYES OF THE PIG."

Sir,—Peter N. Temm's letter raised an interesting question as to the extent to which a fiction writer is entitled to play with the facts of nature. Would Mr. Temm claim that if his "imaginative work of fiction" required it, he would say that a river ran uphill, or that the hero thrown out of an airliner by the villain did not fall to his death but remained floating in the air? Jules Verne did not go that far.

If a fiction writer cannot disregard the laws of natural forces, then is he entitled to disregard the nature, habits or physical characteristics of animals? I imagine that the deer stalker who didn't shoot his deer but ran it down or the chamois hunter in the alps who outleaped his quarry, would merit the "hoots of derision" mentioned by "Nimrod" in his letter.

To quote only two instances of this defiance of nature in Mr. Temm's story:

(1) The pig tossed the dog, and while the former still had its head in the air, the boy rushed in and stuck it. A pig with its four feet on the ground cannot raise its head above the horizontal plane. (Never mind about asking what the pig was doing while the boy was rushing in.)

(2) The pig's eyes had turned red with rage and the boy stuck it, so that when his boss's eyes turned red with rage, the boy's automatic reaction was to stick him. As a pig's eyes do not turn red with rage, the whole premise on which Mr. Temm's story is built (and which gives its title) is false.

N. V. HODGSON (Opatiki).

## THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH

Sir,—J. D. McDonald's lengthy review of *Money, Medicine and the Masses*, by A. D. G. Blanc, seems something of a waste of talent. The reviewer read far more into this book than its contents justify. Certainly he criticises the shortcomings of style, and also says that much of the information is available elsewhere. There remains little left of the book but Blanc's petulant anger,

which is based more on prejudice than on open-minded conviction.

Blanc's remarks about the prevalence of quackery in New Zealand are much exaggerated, as regards both past and present. Nor do they justify the inference that osteopaths, chiropractors and naturopaths are in the same category. Much of what Blanc has written does not apply at the present time. In other words, the book is years too late and there are many more pressing problems in his profession that the author could have dealt with in a book with such an all-inclusive title. In support of this opinion, it could be mentioned that the book was reviewed far more critically, by a doctor, over the air in a recent ZB Sunday night book review.

J. D. McDonald has allowed himself to be over-impressed by a book of little substance and doubtful value.

## ALSO SOCIALISTIC

(Christchurch).

## A TROLLOPE SERIAL

Sir,—"Wool" urges me to follow his wholehearted example and "deliberately avoid" all radio adaptations of famous books. A very brief period of listening only is needed for assessment; I believe in sampling radio plays before passing judgment, and in any case it is difficult to understand how "Wool" can be so positive that all are "junk" if he has forsworn them for so long. I don't know that I would even call *The Lilian Dale Affair* "junk," though it is certainly an entirely unjustifiable travesty of Trollope's book. Your contributor has, I suggest, by his inflexibility, missed quite a few grains of wheat among the chaff—Dickens's *Dombey and Son* and Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* as examples, and probably Scott's *St. Ronan's Well*. A.H.R. (Dunedin).

Sir,—Cheers for L. Gerard for expressing his sentiments on this serial. He is not alone in wondering if he will depart this life before scoundrel Crosbie is brought to book. I wonder if the sponsors realise that each Lilian Dale "half-hour" comprises twenty minutes of serial, five minutes of advertising and five minutes of fill-in music *ad nauseum*.

Radio listeners can tolerate the necessary evil of advertising script, but some of them wonder how a twenty-minute episode can become a "half-hour" broadcast. Some of them, too, realise that if these broadcasts really were half-hour ones, as announced, they might in fact hear the end of this quite good play before its beginning has completely faded from memory.

SHORT MEASURE (Wellington).

## SIR GEORGE GREY

Sir,—The short broadcast on Sir George Grey's last years, under the heading *To-day in New Zealand History*, from 2YA on September 20, was magnificent from every point of view. Every young person who heard it should ponder over it as a tribute to perhaps the most outstanding figure in New Zealand history. In one of my books, *A Pioneer Looks Back Again*, several pages are devoted to Sir George as an outstanding empire builder because he won the respect of the Pakehas and the confidence of the Maori chiefs by his

competent administration and his energetic reforms. He reconciled conflicting communities and laid the foundations for future prosperity. I was a youth when I first met Sir George Grey at my father's backblock home at a time of crisis between Pakeha and Maori in Taranaki. At the end of last century it was my privilege to stand at his tomb in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Now I am an octogenarian and nearly the same age as Sir George was when he died. His name and Governor Hobson's will last down through the centuries.

W. K. HOWITT (Devonport).

## "THESE DARK GLASSES."

Sir,—"P.J.W.'s" review of *These Dark Glasses* gives a useful summary of Greville Texidor's book. Following up the suggestion that it's the work of a sick mind and at the same time deadly serious, I quote these lines from T. S. Eliot's *East Coker*, published in 1940:

Our only health is the disease  
If we obey the dying nurse  
Whose constant care is not to please  
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,  
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.

I think this book shows indications that in rejecting previously cherished ideals and attitudes the author does not shut out the possible emergence of new ones. The words of Comrade Ruth Brown quoted by "P.J.W.": "I do not wish to leave. There is no future. Suicide is meaningless" suggest conflict even within the despair, and the moment of turning towards the necessity, stressed in Eliot's lines, to seek restoration—that is a future—through growing worse.

I don't know the exact date when W. B. Yeats wrote his *Second Coming*, but I think it deals with the contemporary situation and supports the validity of her new attitude in the lines:

The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

It's the passionate intensity of the closed 'ism that Ruth Brown rejects, and in refusing suicide at the same time she faces wilfully nilly the challenge to whatever lies beyond. In sticking to her "phoney" companions she virtually challenges them too.

E.P.D. (Mt. Maunganui).

## "CROWNS OF ENGLAND."

Sir,—I have been a regular listener to 2YZ's *Crowns of England*. In the episode put over the air on September 24 it was definitely stated that Cromwell used evidence that he knew to be false to secure Strafford's conviction. I have done my best to find historical evidence for this, but have failed. Tonight the same thing was stressed again, so I presume there is good authority. Could any listener give me a supporting reference?

INTERESTED (Havelock North).

(More letters from Listeners will be found on page 13)

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

N. Bradley (Napier): Have sent your letter to the Talks Department.

Ethel Douglas (Wanganui): The records were specially imported, and are not available for general use.

G. N. Hickey (Wellington): Many thanks. Your contribution has been sent on to the S.P.C.A.