

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

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A Man's A Man

WHEN Scots round the world this week drink to the "Immortal Memory," the song most fervently remembered will perhaps be "A Man's a Man." It is a song of men for men, and men have never been in such danger before in Scotland or anywhere else. For the purpose of the totalitarian powers is to reduce men to ciphers; to rob them not only of their individuality but of those attributes that make and keep them men—free minds, and free wills. Scotsmen may in fact feel on Saturday night that it is Burns against half the world.

Nor does it alter the case in the least that he challenges the other half as well. Wherever sense and worth are in bondage to fools and knaves Burns is a flaming sword of protest. Wherever privilege "struts and stares" and lords it over honest men he flings its pride back in its teeth. But what he says most angrily and most scathingly is that the man who *allows* it to strut and stare is not a man at all—that a real man dares to be poor, if he must, but does not dare to be ashamed.

But what the Dictators are trying to take from us is not so much our food or our clothes or our homes or our trade as our independence of spirit. They will rob us of material things if they can—they have done it to the Jews and are doing it to the Poles. But they *must* rob us of our minds and wills or see their whole monstrous system fall in ruins. Burns proclaims the dignity of man. They proclaim the over-ruling importance of the State, by which they mean their own plan, with all its foul tyrannies. Outside the New Testament there is no such passionate declaration as Burns's of the rights of the individual as an individual. On this side of the Dark Ages there has been no such fiendish attempt as Hitler is making to put the individual into a strait-jacket and keep him there.

So every drink tossed off to Burns on Saturday night is a toast to liberty. Every speech made in his honour rallies the chainless mind. Every Scot who sings and every Sassenach who joins in singing these five verses puts up five prayers to Heaven for man as man. Every "coward-slave" who hangs his head betrays his country and dishonours his kind.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

PROSE OR POETRY

Sir,—If it did nothing else my *Listener* review of Anton Vogt's collection of verse "Anti All That" provoked Llewellyn Etherington of Auckland to a heartfelt bah. I am not going to enter into a long argument with Mr. Etherington (although the subject is well worth arguing) for the simple reason that first, he has obviously not read "Anti All That," and second, he knows little or nothing of the development of modern verse.

I would only suggest to Mr. Etherington that he find out something about it, and I would recommend two books—Edmund Wilson's "Axel's Castle" and Elizabeth Drew's "New Directions in Modern Verse." Then he should take a course of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, MacNeice, Archibald MacLeish, Stephen Vincent Benet, Carl Sandburg, and a few others.

Especially would I recommend E. E. Cummings, because Cummings, I feel sure, would give Mr. Etherington an attack of apoplexy. For not only does Cummings refuse to split up his verse into regular lines and make them jingle (heinous offence) but he also forgets capital letters at the beginning of his lines, and is apt to dash off provocative little statements like the following:

*Picasso
you give us Things
which
bulge.*

All this has little to do with "Anti All That," most of which I still claim is strong and individualistic—and occasionally "complex." But Mr. Etherington had better read it before he says any more.—J.G.M. (Wellington).

NEW ZEALAND VERSE

Sir,—In his criticism of Anton Vogt's poems a few weeks ago, J.G.M. said: "One thing I am thankful for—there is only one dose of New Zealand atmosphere in the whole collection. It is a healthy sign; yet another New Zealand poet is refusing to write for New Zealand alone."

I find it hard to see how the avoidance of familiar and understood atmosphere will give a New Zealand writer a wider appeal. A sincere and resolute attempt at putting the New Zealand scene into words might accomplish much. (By this I do not mean that the rata and clematis should be dragged in indiscriminately. William Sanyan is no less an American writer because he seldom mentions Forty-second Street or the Grand Canyon). Such writers as Dreiser, Dos Passos, Faulkner and Steinbeck, to mention only a few, concentrate almost exclusively on the American scene and yet no one could pretend that they are read solely by Americans. "War and Peace" could only have been written by a Russian, but this has not prevented its translation into many languages and its appreciation by thousands of outside readers. To revert to another form—Gauguin, if he worked for anyone but himself, certainly did not do so for the sole pleasure of the inhabitants of a small South Sea island, while Van Gogh's frenzy has probably never been appreciated by the potato-eaters or the workers in the fields round Arles.

Following the same argument it seems clear that they will never be able to write for anyone outside New Zealand until our artists and writers learn to write for those that live within. — ISOBEL ANDREWS (Wellington).

WHOSE FAULT?

Sir,—Having had the pleasure of seeing and hearing Mr. Noel Coward several times I very much looked forward to his advertised broadcasts over National stations on Saturday, January 4; also to-night, Friday, January 10.

On neither occasion did he broadcast, and no word of apology or regret was given. Doubtless there were excellent reasons for postponement or cancellation and the matter may have been mentioned over the air earlier on each day, but I practically confine myself to shortwave, and it would surely have been courteous to have given some explanation to-night at 7.45 p.m. in place of merely playing gramophone records. The moral seems to be: "Stick to short-wave."—A. C. EAMES (Kerikeri).

(A correspondent who neither reads the official broadcasting journal nor listens to the news from the broadcasting stations can hardly expect our sympathy if he loses contact with events. Mr. Coward's illness, and the consequent disturbance of his itinerary, have been announced in at least three issues of *The Listener*. We cannot undertake to supply intitutional warnings as well.—Ed.)

EXPLANATION PLEASE?

Sir,—May I ask why it is that we cannot rely on the programmes as printed in *The Listener*. Some time ago the ZB stations had an interesting radio serial ("Betty and Bob") when suddenly it ceased without any explanation or apology. Then not very long ago we heard "Betty and Bob" on again—and now this has suddenly ceased without explanation. Were these things overlooked, or was it another way of saying "D-n the programme; give them anything that comes to hand"?

Now 3YA are supposed to give us a band programme to-night (December 9) but we are not permitted the satisfaction of identifying the ensemble we are listening to. (Just one other observation here. Some studio officials evidently think that march tempo is about 200 instead of 120. They would very soon alter their opinion if put behind a band and made to march at the rate they put on some of the records.)

After what may seem to you these very trivial growls, may I say that I'm not reflecting on your paper, which I always thoroughly enjoy and would not miss. But I consider that station officials are sometimes lax, and I fancy that they could give a little more thought sometimes to the listener. After all, that is partly what we buy the paper for, and it is our only guide as to what to expect. So we dial accordingly.

May I conclude by wishing you and your staff the compliments of the season.—"COLONEL BOGEY" (Opawa).

(*The Listener* does its best, the stations do their best, but with Hitler doing his worse on land and sea it is impossible to be sure (1) that further instalments of features will arrive on time from overseas and (2) that a local emergency will not disturb arrangements after we go to press and before the item is put on the air. We thank our correspondent for his good wishes, which we heartily reciprocate.—Ed.)

SPORTSMEN'S LANGUAGE.

Sir,—I am beginning to take umbrage at the way "John Doe" has butted in on the interesting exchange which your contributor "Thid" and I had on the above subject. Who, if I may ask, taught "John Doe" that such verse-forms as hexameters and pentameters, and such measures as trochees, anapaests and dactyls, were "classical terminology" and only properly to be applied to Greek or Latin verse? A pentameter is a line of five feet and whether it is written by Cicero or Cicely Courtneidge does not make one iota of difference, though it is generally understood that an English pentameter is iambic. Go back to Helicon, "John Doe," and have another drink on me.—"ZEBEDEE" (Auckland).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT.

"BUNG HAD SUNG."—We believe you. But he may not do it again on this page. (See our issue of December 20, page 15.)