

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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## When Shaw Talked To Our Farmers

IT is improbable that the crisis in the meat and dairying industries has turned our farmers' minds to G. B. Shaw. But it is a fact that the nimble mind of Shaw was once turned searchingly on our farmers. It will be remembered that Shaw visited New Zealand seven years ago and talked with generous freedom to the newspapers. What he said and why he said it most of us have now forgotten; but no farmer should have forgotten it; and if we remind farmers now that he urged us to drink our own milk and eat our own cheese we are not trying any harder than he did to pull the producer's patient leg.

It is of course elementary that if we drank all the milk produced in New Zealand or ate all the butter and cheese our fate would be sadder than that of the outback farmers of Australia who go mad (the cynics of Sydney say) by living all day with sheep. We must not go mad, and we must not become lumps of butter-fat; but we must, however dangerous it is, spend most of our time with cows or sheep, and since Hitler is taking advantage of that necessity we must find out how to outwit him. It is true that when Shaw was among us in 1934 such a crisis as we now face seemed a very remote possibility. We were not then thinking of wars, though some of us may have been thinking of revolutions, and now that war has come Shaw's suggestions must be adapted to the facts actually facing us.

Well, the most dismal of those facts to primary producers is the absence of overseas transport; and it does not matter much to the farmer himself whether he is ruined by the failure of his harvest to reach its markets or by the inability of the markets to take it. When Shaw told us to keep our wool on our own backs, harness our own water power, get our fertilising nitrates from our own air, develop our own manufactures, and eat our own food, he was thinking chiefly of the possibility that Britain might not be able forever to buy what we had to sell. The crisis, as it happens, has come in another way: Britain wants everything that we can produce but because she can no longer take delivery, our farmers are looking across the same blank waters. The moral of course is that a collapsed house is a ruin whether a shell shatters it or an earthquake — and in both cases is the responsibility of the whole community.

## 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 in 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.

### A COMMON ERROR

Sir,—Your correspondent, John Doe, in his letter headed "An Explanation" (in *The Listener* of March 14), made this statement: "A man is 21 years of age on the day preceding his 21st birthday." John Doe hereby joins the ranks of the mistaken legion who are in the habit of saying that a man, or woman, comes of age on his or her 21st birthday.

May I, gently but firmly, point out, Mr. Editor, for the benefit of John Doe and others, that an individual's first birthday is the day he or she is born. Consequently, what John Doe should have said is that a man is 21 years of age on the day preceding his 22nd birthday, or, alternatively, on the day preceding the 21st anniversary of his birth. — L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

### "MR. AND MRS. GRUMBLE"

Sir,—I think Editors should go straight to Paradise when they die, without the cleansing fires of Purgatory, as some poor compensation for suffering captious critics gladly. Maybe it is good to have an open forum where readers can discharge their surplus bile—but "methinks they do protest too much." As for classical music puritans who are always bleating for Bach and Beethoven—well, they should be tied to a stake and jazzed to death by Yankee dance bands with Broddingnagian loud speakers.

Disraeli once said: "Critics—why critics are only disappointed authors." And I recollect that Oscar Wilde gently flayed them thus: "There are some folk who are always grumbling—if you were to put the liver-wing of an angel before them, they would grumble at the bloody stuffing." The adjective is his, not mine. Let it stand, Mr. Editor; Bernard Shaw uses it.—HENRY J. HAYWARD (Auckland).

### BROADCAST ENGLISH

Sir,—While I agree with most of what "Lapsus Linguae" says about pronunciation (*Listener*, March 21), I notice that his examples of the vagaries of pronunciation are mostly proper names of people and places. These I am not concerned with; if a person writes his name Cholmondeley or Samuel Clemens, and wants it pronounced Marshbanks or Mark Twain, that is his affair, and politely I follow his personal desire.

My comments on pronunciation, especially as heard on the air, concern words which have a pronunciation accepted by educated persons who know what is correct. There is at a certain time and for a number of years, often more than a generation, a "correct" way of saying a word. Dinghy is not now dingy; what it—or what banal or basic, or even Achilles—may be in forty years' time I don't know. But there is a correct way of saying these words now, and we should not hear them mispronounced.

What I am concerned with is not the lowest common denominator, as in the humorous examples quoted by the *Daily Mail*, but the highest common factor (not the "highest factor," Oxford or extreme BBC) but the highest common standard, common to people who have some knowledge of the language, some education, some personal acquaintance with proper speech.

People who do not know, as those speakers on the air I have mentioned obviously do not know, the correct pronunciation of words they use should ascertain it by reference to a good dictionary for instance. The main cause of this mispronunciation is not, as "Lapsus Linguae" suggests, that we lack a standard spelling, it is sheer ignorance of the correct pronunciation. Nor, as "Lapsus Linguae" says, is their guess as good as mine. They don't know: I do.

As I wrote the above your current issue (March 28) came into my hands. "Quis custodiet?" I do not

agree with J. Voss that bureau is accented on the last syllable; French words have no pronounced stress, as have most English words, on some syllable. Adult is pronounced differently, according to whether it is noun or adjective. Richard Roe really underlines what I say—that ignorance is the cause of mispronunciation. As for precedence, mentioned in a precedent paragraph (but this is not to be a precedent) if Fowler says I am wrong he is probably right, as we both are usually.—JOHN DOE (Auckland).

### TURTLE OR TORTOISE?

Sir,—While offering congratulations on the delightful children's page in *The Listener*, in the interest of truth and accuracy, I feel that I should point out that Myrtle is no turtle—but a tortoise!—that is if her looks do not belie her! Both turtles and tortoises come under the category of reptiles, but the land species are usually designated as tortoises, the aquatic kinds as turtles. Therefore as Myrtle's portrait depicts her leading an apparently natural life on land, I'm afraid that she must resign herself to being Myrtle the Tortoise.

With good wishes for the Children's Page.

VERITAS (Wellington).

(Our correspondent may be right. Someone else has made the same complaint. But we hope both have noticed on whose broad back Myrtle first appeared.—Ed.).

### FAMILY HISTORIES

Sir,—Perhaps I can help "Neutral," Petone, who seems rather undecided about her family traditions. "About 1219 Hugh Rose of Geddes was witness to the foundation charter of Beauty Priory. His son Hugh acquired the lands of Kilravock by marriage, and Kilravock remains with the family to the present day. Sir Hugh Rose, born in 1803, did much to save India for the Empire, and was raised to the peerage as Baron Strathnairn in 1866. The present chief of Clan Rose is Lieut.-Col. Hugh Rose 24th of Kilravock." If "Neutral" would like more information she should get "Clars and Tartans of Scotland" by Robert Bain, City Librarian, Glasgow, from which the above is taken. "Origin of British Surnames" by C. L'estrang Owen is also a useful little book, and Ewen says: "Before the coming of William the Conqueror, hereditary family appellations were unknown in the British Isles. Of so little permanent value were the secondary descriptions in the 12th Century that numbers of people from the King downward had nothing of the kind. By the end of the 12th Century the recording clerks considered it a duty to give every person a mark of identification and thereafter it is rare to find any person without an official secondary description."

So "Neutral's" Clan goes back about 722 years. The original name was most probably "Rosen" but about this time names changed very much, and naturally "Rosen" became English "Rose." My own family claims to go back to about 1297 in Scotland, and to get further information we must go to Cleveland in Yorkshire, where the name had a different form in Norman and gradually changed to English. Anyhow, it's great fun tracing British surnames.—"ARGOSY" (Te Awamutu).

### BROADCAST ENGLISH

Sir,—John Doe and Richard Roe have started an argument about English and how it should be pronounced over the air. I am sure there are a good many listeners like myself who do not listen for mistakes in English or in grammar, but who like to hear announcers just speak as New Zealanders. A young nation will find a language of its own—sooner or later, and the vowels and accents will very likely change to suit. There may be a little slang as well. I like to hear the Irish brogue, the Scotch with their "Do ye no ken?" or the Welshmen who will "say it with music." I think the intonation of their voice almost as good as a Maori orator's. — R. WILSON (Westport).