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Fools in Parliament

WE print on page 10 what the *Economist* had to say recently about the case of Captain Ramsay, M.P. We print it deliberately, and with a consciousness of our responsibility. When the *Economist* calls a man a fool it means that he is a fool, and that his folly is of public importance. For the *Economist* does not traffic in sensations. It is as dignified as the *Spectator* and, in a matter of this kind, at least as well informed as *The Times*. Yet it says plainly, and with biting emphasis, that a fool was elected to the House of Commons "because he came of the right sort of family, married a peer's daughter and the widow of a very rich man, went to the right school and joined the right regiment." He was elected because he secured the party nomination, and he secured the party nomination because the selection was made "with infinitely less sense of duty than a selection committee would feel in choosing an English fifteen for Twickenham."

That is strong language. In a leading article in the *Economist* it is sensational language. But nothing that could be said about him would be as sensational as Captain Ramsay's presence in the House of Commons—except one thing; and the *Economist* supplies that, too: the presence in the House of Commons, at a time when the nation is fighting for its existence, of many other "tenth-rate nonentities" who got there precisely as Captain Ramsay did. They were the "right type." The wire-pullers wanted them. They could be trusted to "jeer at Mr. Churchill, to admire the moral grandeur of Stanley Baldwin, and to applaud the foresight of Mr. Chamberlain." All of which they did.

And the trouble is, they are there still. England is more united than it has ever been before, and is fighting the greatest fight in its history. But its rulers are carrying all those "silly asses" on their backs, and struggling along against all the resentment their presence in Parliament provokes among earnest patriots; resentment and suspicion; and God knows what black thoughts besides. To be silent about such things is almost to justify them.

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 Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published.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.

OUR FILM REVIEWS

Sir,—Congratulations to H. Wadham upon his emergence from the chrysalis of anonymity. I wish I could congratulate him as heartily upon his statement of facts. He accuses me of shifting my ground and of misquoting him, and he thereby lays himself open to an obvious "Tu quoque," for he now asserts that I "want G.M.'s film reviews scrapped because some films contain 'risqué' situations." A reference to my original letter on this subject will show Mr. Wadham the error of his assertion: I never said or implied that your film reviews should be "scrapped." I said I was curious to know why so much of your space should be devoted to them—a curiosity which is probably shared by many of your readers.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

THE TERM OF ENDEARMENT

Sir,—At page 44 of your issue of October 3 you refer to "Sir George Julius, son of New Zealand's late Archbishop Julius, and the inventor of the mechanical totalisator." *Hansard* reports of debates on the Gaming Bill of 1881 show that the mechanical totalisator was then well known, so its inventor can hardly have been born later than about 1860. "Who's Who in New Zealand" shows that the late Archbishop Julius got married in 1873. Seldom, I think, has genealogical misfortune been more delicately indicated.

ADMIRING READER (Wellington).

(We blush. "Mechanical" should have been "electrical." —Ed.)

FIFTH SYMPHONY.

Sir,—Many of your readers will, I am sure, regard as little short of sacrilege the association of Ludwig van Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with the "V" for Victory campaign. The coincidence that the succession of long and short notes should correspond with the Morse Code signal for "V" can scarcely be claimed as giving the music a political significance, as is suggested in the "Around the Nationals" section of your issue of October 3. One of the most beneficial things about music is that it is a language which can be understood and appreciated by people of any country, creed, or class. Men of every land have blessed the great master for his immortal works. Would not Beethoven turn in his grave if he knew of the spurious use to which his glorious symphony is being put?

—MUSIQUE (Te Kuiti).

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Sir,—"Anti-blues" compares good music with fashions in dress. What person with any understanding of art and culture would do this? The jazz which "Anti-blues" supports compares more favourably with fashions—both quickly become stale and out-of-date. The fact that we are at war is no excuse for throwing overboard culture, morality and good taste. To the music-lover, and to the person of average refinement, the blaring trumpet and brazen trombone in a jazz band, along with all the other hokey of swing, is more distressing and disgusting than "Anti-blues" can apparently understand. And one does not need to become vulgar to become gay. Who could be gayer than Mozart, or wittier than Haydn, more thrilling than Wagner, or more inspiring than Bach or Beethoven?

"A SCHOOLBOY" (New Plymouth).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Anti-blues" in his reply to "Discobobulous" makes use of the word "hokey." I have only a vague idea of the meaning of the word, but if it means what I think, his letter

is a very good example. Does he suggest that present-day styles have more gaiety than those of the past two centuries? That is almost as fallacious as the claim that light music is brighter than the classics. Also, if by his misquotation of Longfellow, he means that classical music is a thing of the past, he is being merely absurd. I am happy to believe that there is to-day more appreciation of real music than there was in the past century, at least in British countries, and for the simple reason that people as a rule have more opportunities of hearing it. Let "Anti-blues" sing his V for Victory songs (sic) whatever they may be, and whistle at his work, if he pleases, but I would not have him labour under the delusion that the effect so produced is, even distantly, akin to music.

H.W.L. (Auckland).

JOKES IN THE BIBLE.

Sir,—Your learned correspondent Gilbert J. Johnston, B.A., would have us accept his as the final authoritative word on translation from the Hebrew. We are in no position to criticise his assumption of this mantle—but it is possibly a pity that he has not devoted a little more time to the literature of what is (presumably) his native tongue. Alexander Pope, whom Mr. Johnston (B.A.) misquotes, actually wrote "A little learning is a dangerous thing"—and this surely Mr. Johnston (B.A.) should know. Or could it be that his knowledge of the English poets has been "culled from the shilling reprints of last century scholarships"? May I ask Mr. Johnston (B.A.) the next time he feels "called upon to correct the rash statements" of anybody, to make sure that his own position cannot be criticised. It makes us suspect the B.A. and all. It even makes us wonder whether Gore can yet be considered one of the cultural centres of the world.

BOSWELL (failed B.A.), (Wellington).

ENGLISH ON THE AIR

Sir,—I hope the ZB stations will accept the following as constructive rather than destructive criticism. But some of us are proud of our mother tongue and feel a rather nasty jar on hearing advertisements such as these:

Twelve tablespoon-fuls to every packet.

Different to any other you have bought.

If any girl or boy wants — they can get it at the desk.

He is an *amiter* (amateur) racer.

If I was going to buy a certain product it would be —.

I have been told that this kind of thing is accepted now; but it can never be accepted while we are British and proud of our country and of our mother tongue.

(MRS.) N. DAVIDSON (Timaru).

"SNOW WHITE"

Sir,—In your "Run Through the Programmes" section of September 28-October 4 you make mention of the original "Snow White." I should feel sorry if, as your paragraph says, fairy tales were not read by the modern child. I know of three widely separated groups of children who received their introduction to the tale from a children's operetta, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," before Walt Disney's film was released in New Zealand. You say also that "there is a very plausible account of Snow White in Hans Andersen's Tales." My own comprehensive volume (Oxford Edition) does not contain it, while my much smaller collection of Grimm's Fairy Tales gives the account under the title "Snowdrop." The change of title is easily explained when it is remembered that the tales are translated from the German.

GERDA (Picton).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Elsa Andrews (Feilding), wants to know (1), why announcers should name an item after and not before it is heard; (2), why so much "racing and gambling comes constantly over the radio"; and (3), why "the most utter rubbish" is broadcast from 2YA just before 5 o'clock.