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## Artists And Critics

IT is perhaps necessary to point out that the article which appears on Pages 4 and 5 of this issue is a news story only. Nothing is further from our purpose than to express an opinion about the decision in the recent Auckland case, which was given by a Court better able to judge the facts than we are, and which has been accepted by both sides. But we do wish to draw attention to the principle involved in all such cases, namely that critics exercise their very necessary function at considerable risk; that they fail in their duty when they are dishonestly flattering, and yet endanger their pockets (and sometimes their liberty) when they are more frank than a jury may think permissible. It is certainly better that a critic should have to write in the fear of the law than that an artist should be exposed to irresponsible ridicule or abuse. The freer we are the more sensible we should be of the obligations of freedom, and for that reason the libel laws of most democratic countries are extremely strict. They say, roughly, that if damage is done an action will lie, and if they said less than that the public would not have sufficient protection. For print can of course be a cruelly damaging weapon. But the critic has his duty too. He must say what he thinks true when it is for the good of society that he should speak at all, and he should be able to say it without fear if he speaks courteously, reasonably, and without malice. In other words, the line between fair and unfair comment should be drawn for the public good and not for the protection of vanity or incompetence. It is so drawn by law, and should be so drawn by those who apply the law, whether they sit on the Bench or listen in the jury-box.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### HEALTH ARTICLES.

Sir,—I, and I think many others who have the care of small children, would find it a great convenience if your weekly articles on health were republished in booklet form.

—MOTHER (Wellington).

(The day may come. Meanwhile we thank our correspondent for this encouragement.—Ed.)

### DEADLY DISEASES.

Sir,—Shall I be cast into outer darkness for daring to contradict the famous G. B. Shaw by stating that the one deadly disease is not discouragement but complacency. Discouragement preys only on the weak and craven, but complacency, because of the insidiousness of its attack, downs the strong. "God's in his heaven, all's well with the world." And yet the United Churches see fit to publish and circulate "Bill Broadsheet."

—C. Y. NICKEL (Otago Central).

### CONDITIONED REFLEXES.

Sir,—J.S. protests at a radio presentation of a woman as a semi-moronic foil for a man's efficiency. Pavlov conditioned dogs to yelp "Eats" at the ringing of a bell. A majority of the human race have been conditioned to yelp "Inefficiency" at the mention of women. Hitler conditioned human beings to yelp shameful words at the mention of Jew. If these years have a message it is that we must rid ourselves of dangerous conditioned reflexes. Thank goodness that any woman trammie is doing more to put us right regarding women than any radio yelper is doing to put us wrong.

—ANTIYELP (Auckland).

### DESERT-ISLAND-LIBRARY.

Sir,—Most lists of books for castaways or other inhabitants of desert islands consist largely of the books no one else ever gets time to read. I think the list should go like this:

**Section A:** Edible Plants and How to Distinguish Them from Poisonous Ones, with an appendix on Simple Antidotes, Just in Case; Simple Cooking for Amateurs; Simple Carpentry for Amateurs; Simple Boat-building for Amateurs, etc.

**Section B:** Simple methods of making all the tools, utensils, etc. mentioned in all the books in Section A.

**Section C:** Ditto for all the tools, etc. mentioned in all the books in Section B.

And so on, in an infinite regress, until we reach **Section Z. Leisure Reading.** Here we just have a brief note: "Castaways have no leisure. Even people baching in a highly civilised community, with Woolworth's just around the corner, don't have much. One light novel to read on the ship which finally rescues you will be ample." For my own part, I am sure I would spend the first ten years trying to make the first tool with which to make the first tool with which to make . . . etc.

—MAEVIUS (Wellington).

### BOOKS AND FILMS.

Sir,—One is accustomed when viewing the dramatisation on the screen of outstanding works of fiction to find the

author's story hacked about in various directions, presumably as an offering to the box-office deity. Surely, however, this procedure has been carried to extreme in the latest example—*Pied Piper*—which began a season in Auckland on Friday last. Here we find the name part being played by an actor who is the very antithesis of the character in the book. Instead of the reserved English tourist, the great Monty Woolley appears as a sort of caricature Bernard Shaw, with dashes of Shavian satire interpolated to complete the picture. *The Pied Piper* is perhaps the best novel of Wartime England to date, and according to the theatrical advertisement, millions are supposed to have read it. Why then should these millions be subjected to a travesty of the book on the screen? Even from a £ s. d. point of view, this does not seem to make sense. Does the rich reward attaching to book films, render the authors indifferent to what happens to their books in the process?

—J. M. KEALY (St. Heliers).

### "BALD" OR "BARE"?

Sir,—I see that you announce from 1YA, Auckland, a recording of Moussorgsky's "Night on a Bare Mountain." Is this correct? This work was listed in *Fantasia* as "Night on Bald Mountain," Bald Mountain being in Southern Kiev, Russia, where all evil spirits used to gather to do homage to Tchernobog, the Black God. I would be very grateful if you would say definitely which is the right name?

DISNEY FAN (Christchurch).

(Philip Hale, in a programme note on this work, quoted a letter from Moussorgsky to Balakireff in which the composer said he was depicting a Witches' Sabbath on "Bald Mountain." The title *Night on a Bare Mountain* might or might not have the composer's authority.)

### THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Sir,—Your long-suffering paper is once again asked to register a complaint which is really also an urgent request for programmes such as were given us a year or two ago. At present we are being starved for good music, and although fully aware of the varying tastes to be catered for, I think it is only reasonable that at least one station every night should give what is worth listening to. We used to go through our *Listener* and mark ahead what must not be missed, but now these items take a good deal of looking for, and the more so as our radio is limited in its range because of its position under a hill. What we ask for could, one would imagine, be provided for regularly for Wellington by 2YC.

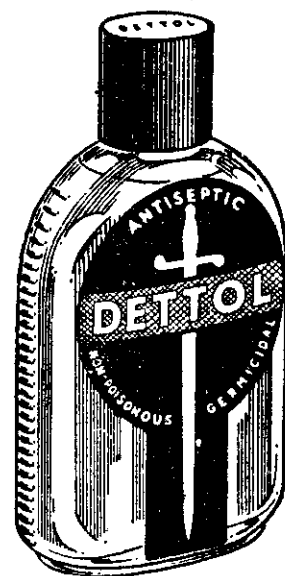
"MURITAI" (Eastbourne).

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

"Mother of Four" (Seaton). (1) If you are we congratulate you. If you are not you should not claim to be. (2) You must not impute ignorance to other correspondents. (3) "Mater" is feminine and not masculine. (4) We do not divulge names given to us in confidence.

T.McS. (Wellington). No photograph available.

"Shut In" (Dunedin). (1) Nell Stirling (Mrs. George Edwards). (2) Singer not known. (3) Music not obtainable.



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