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EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.

G.P.O. Box 1707.

Wellington, C.1.

Telephone 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Not Understood

IT is not mere frivolity that turns us this week from Teheran to Thomas Bracken. Nor is it wholly the fact that Teheran will have been over-exploited before we can get into print. Although we do not subscribe to the theory that it is better to write a nation's songs than to win its battles, it is important to write the songs if the nation survives to sing them. It is in fact a major misfortune that a great singer has not yet arisen in New Zealand. Bracken was not a great singer—even in the popular sense. But he did sing, and it is better to have a singer of sorts than no singer at all. He wrote at least two poems that everybody knows, and one has become our national song. The other is pretty thin in thought, and pretty thick in sentiment, but it has meant something to thousands of people who have remained unmoved by better things; and would still have been unmoved if the better things had been written in their day. In fact no good poems were written in Bracken's day by anybody, and not many that were nearly good. New Zealand has lived through his century and a little longer, without giving birth to any writer who has captured, and held, the national mind. We have not even, like Australia with the *Sydney Bulletin*, developed a school of writers who instantly suggest New Zealand. We remain inarticulate. But Bracken is one of the influences that will untie our tongues some day. For it does not seem to be true that there is a Gresham's Law of verse. Instead of driving out good poetry, bad poetry seems to make good poetry a little more likely. So if Bracken was "not understood" in his own day, there is no reason why we should perpetuate the misunderstanding by expecting things of him to-day that he never pretended to know or say. He did know what poetry was made of—always and everywhere; and when our great writer does arrive he will dip his pen into the same kind of ink.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

HAIR-BRAINED

Sir,—Having printed some "Hair-brained" matter by one "Weatherwise," you may be good enough to print this as rejoinder:

Bid For Peace

*SHALL good old Britain be decried
Because, like Jesus crucified,
She made a bid for friendly Peace
And sought to give the world release
From silly, senseless strife?
And do we need to be alarmed
Because some other nations armed,
And tried the world to dominate
By brutal force and ruthless hate,
And sought to spoil all life?
And shall we shout about the cost
Of gaining Peace? The world's well lost,
It need be, for a grand ideal,
For life devoid of shams and real,
For life with friendship rife.*
C.C.C. (Cambridge).

Sir,—In answer to "Weatherwise" in a recent issue:

*THE folks who talked of pacifism
Can take the blame for the Rot,
Said the Tory propaganda,
Quite good scapegoats, what?
While Hitler was re-arming,
We Tories didn't fuss.
We said he'll fight the Bolsheviks,
He'll never turn on us.
We sat on the Treasury benches,
We were the party in power;
To us you entrusted your safety—
What shall we say in this hour
But turn on the few idealists
To cover up our shame?
For years we were friends with Hitler,
But the long-haired can take the blame.
In the years that the Nazis were arming,
We weren't the least bit scared,
But as soon as Hitler dropped his mask,
We told you we weren't prepared.
Manchuria, Ethiopia and the rest—
Our party and class mean more.
It was we who let the Germans re-arm,
So blame someone else for the war!*
ENDWISE (Gore).

AN EL OR AN AR?

Sir,—Your paragraph on the spelling of the name of the largest of the British Solomon Islands reminded me of a note in a recent issue of *The Southern Cross Log*, the official journal of the Melanesian Mission. It was there recorded that a couple of hours' visit to the Mitchell Library in Sydney revealed that the "I" was correct. The name was given by one of the senior officers of Mendana's expedition of discovery in 1568 and commemorates his home in Spain. The B.S.I. Administration also advised that Guadalcanal was the official usage.

W. T. Brigham's *Index to the Islands of the Pacific Ocean*, published in 1900 by the B. P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, gives under the heading Guadalcanar: "the Guadalcanal of Gallego and Mendana who discovered it in April, 1568 . . . Native name Guamkata . . ." So *The Pacific Islands Yearbook* (edited by R. W. Robson and published in Sydney), usually accepted as the authority on the Pacific Islands, uses only the form with an "I."

Nevertheless, in spite of the weight of authority, it is undoubtedly true that Guadalcanar is the more common in ordinary conversation among those who live or have lived in the islands—probably because of the easier pronunciation. —B. W. COLLINS, Auckland.

BEFORE OR AFTER?

Sir,—The announcement of the Italian titles of the movements of orchestral and chamber works reaches the height of absurdity when it comes at the end of the performance. This is quite common at the local stations, it being apparently left to the whim of the announcer whether he will give these details before the work is played, or after, or both, or not at all. For example, when Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* was broadcast recently, the names of the movements were not announced, though to do this would have greatly helped listeners to appreciate the work. And when the NBS String Quartet played Smetana's E Minor Quartet, the announcer did not say even how many movements it contained, nor did he give the name, "Out of My Life," under which it was published, let alone mention the events in the composer's life on which he avowedly based the work. Without this information, the last movement must be a puzzle to the hearer.

Incidentally, the NBS quartet will be heard with more pleasure by some people when it falls into line with the great chamber music combinations of the past and present, by ceasing to have a "principal."

—DAVID FERGUSON (Wadestown).

DESERT ISLAND MUSIC

Sir,—Perhaps the list of musical composition chosen by one who is virtually isolated in the Pacific will be of interest. I have the island (or should I say the island's got me?) plus the keenness; all I want is some records.

Even if they don't turn up the mere contemplation of such gems as I have listed affords me endless pleasure. I have complied with correspondent D. Scott's suggestion to nominate no more than two works by the same composer together with his other stipulations. They read:

Purcell: *Suite for Strings*. Handel: "Faithful Shepherd," "Water Music," Mozart: "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," Clarinet Concerto. Bach: "Chaconne," Violin Concerto No. 2. Haydn: "Oxford Symphony," "Clock Symphony." Beethoven: *Fifth Symphony*, "Emperor" Concerto. Mendelssohn: "Fingal's Cave." Schubert: "Unfinished" Symphony, "Trout" Quintet. Schumann: *Symphony No. 1* ("Spring"). Schumann: "Carnaval" Suite. Tchaikovsky: "Swan Lake." Edward German: "English Dances." Stravinsky: "The Fire Bird." Grieg: *Piano Concerto*.

—G. M. GOODEY (Somewhere in the Pacific).

CHRISTMAS FORETOLD

Sir,—The cables tell us this week that one of the "most striking" birthday presents received by Mr. Churchill in Teheran was "a silver coin dated 300 B.C." Would this mean that they knew when He was coming? Or did it come out of Joanna Southcott's Box?

—MET A PIEMAN (Wellington).

ONE A MINUTE

Sir,—I have to apologise. I suggested that they arrived one a minute. Your correspondence columns proved last week that I was at least a hundred per cent wrong.

SIMPLE SIMON (Wellington).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

Iris Norgrove.—No address, but in any case, no copy of that issue.