

## PRONUNCIATION OF FOREIGN NAMES

Sir.—I should like to thank "Grinij or Greenwich" for his genial and amusing letter. I think he and I have something in common. But, if I rightly interpret his notation, I can claim that my "ears" are quite as sensitive and accurate as his (it occurs to me that he may be misled by my writing of *er* for the "obscure" vowel, for which he uses *a*). I am not acquainted with Te Awamutu usage; but here in Auckland I have continually heard, from childhood onward, "Moter Hee," and nothing else, for "Moh-too-ee-hay" (the best I can do without a phonetic alphabet, but the vowels are all short), and repeatedly, for at least 30 years, "Teeker Wotter," and nothing else, for "Tay Kah-oo-fah-tah" (the vowels, again, all short). Our pretty *kowhai* tree is here usually "ko-eye," but the compound *Wai-kowhai* is usually "Wyker-wy." I have not heard "Tah-rongah" for *Tauranga* (the commonest Auckland mispronunciation is "Tronger"), but I have heard "Mah-noo" for *Maunu*. As for *Papeete*, I have repeatedly heard "Pappeat" (rhyming with *meat*) both here and in Wellington, and, as it happens, have heard nothing else (incidentally, as the name is a compound of *pape* and *ete*, I am slightly puzzled by "Grinij's" three syllables). Nor do I understand his "Gee-te" for *Goethe*; can it be a misprint?

As I am English by birth and in part by education, and in my time have taught English for 46 years, I can fairly claim some knowledge of the vagaries of English names. "Grinij," of course, knows as well as I do that the spoken forms have been abraded through centuries of use by mostly unlettered people, while a succession of written documents have preserved more or less archaic spellings (many of them indefensible from a practical point of view). The traditional pronunciation of the better-known names has survived (thus the surnames *Gloster*, *Lester*, *Wooster* show the normal pronunciation of *Gloucester*, *Leicester* and *Worcester*; but more often the traditional forms (which "Grinij" unkindly calls "nicknames") of place-names have remained purely local, and those of personal names mainly "aristocratic," while outsiders have had no guide except the conventional spelling.

The results are varied, and sometimes curious. Thus "South-wawk" seems now to be accepted beside "Suth'k" (*South-wark*); "Pontefract" is general except in "Pumfrit" itself; "Syren-sester" appears to be displacing the older "Sissister" even in *Cirencester*, though the country people keep to the still older "Sizziter"; perhaps "Grinij" would join the American visitors in saying "Durby" instead of "Darby," or "Waw-wick" for *Warwick*; even here in New Zealand we have at least one instance of spelling-pronunciation in *Majoribanks* (a misspelling, by the way) as the name of a Wellington street: it is more often called "Major Banks" or "Marjorie Banks" or "M'jorrie Banks" than the traditional "Marchbanks." Even in ordinary words a multitude of minor variations are accepted, or tolerated, in "good" speech: in "Grinij's" list, two pronunciations are "accepted" for *apparent*, or *inherent*, or *obscenity*: for *curious*, "kyooerius" is approved, but "kyoer" or "kyaw-er" or "kyawr" or "kyer" is not condemned. From "Grinij's" second group I take *learn* as typical; the pronunciation he represents as "lurn" is Standard, though

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some dialect-speakers say "lahn" (so did the first Queen Elizabeth), some "lairrn," some probably "lurnn."

It is a notorious fact of language-history that the "popular or common" pronunciation, or idiom, generally prevails in the end, simply because people who know better must, sooner or later, conform if they wish to be understood; thus, if I had to ask my way to *Te Kauwhata*, I should certainly, however unwillingly, say "Teeker Wotter." I leave it to "Grinij" to consider what mispronunciations were responsible, until recently, for the writing of *Pahutanui* for *Pauatahanui*, and of *Kaiwarra* for *Kaiwharawhara*. But I am sure he shares my regret that we New Zealanders so often distort the Maori names of our own country. Maori spelling, unlike ours, is completely straightforward, and the essentials of the pronunciation can be "lurnt" in ten minutes by any man of good will. I hope, too, that he supports my claim that our announcers should give us (as the BBC gives British listeners) something better than the "popular or common" diction.

P. S. ARDERN (Auckland).

Sir,—After reading Elwynne Thomas's letter I decided to read again Bodmer's discussion of the international language problem in *The Loom of Language*. I am impressed by Bodmer's knowledge and insight, but find it surprising that he does not pay more attention to the human factor, particularly since his own conclusions, despite his learned linguistic analysis, seem largely influenced by this. He criticises Zamenhoff for pandering to other nations by including roots which are not truly international, but fails to see that it was this realism which did so much to give Esperanto its wide appeal. Your correspondent will find here an explanation for the fact that Interglossa has already become a museum piece. Something more than linguistic perfection is required to establish an international language. We cannot wait for the perfect language, especially in view of the wide range of opinion about perfection. In Esperanto we have something which, for international usage, is immeasurably superior to any national tongue and which has already been widely accepted. By the test of survival it is the best that has been offered and practical people will be well advised to use it and leave the theorists to dispute about improvements.

C. J. ADCOCK (Wellington).

## LEARNING TO LISTEN

Sir,—I was much interested by the letter from a correspondent who gave her opinion that a person will never become a lover of classical music by listening to radio records. While admitting that hearing a good orchestra is better than listening to a record, I think that she is going much too far and I would like to suggest the paradoxical saying that "sweeping statements are always wrong."

Twenty years ago, I knew practically nothing of music. Few opportunities came my way. I never learned to play any instrument, and I did not know the difference between a concerto and a symphony until about 17 years ago. Of course, I knew glees and part-songs and I knew tonic sol-fa, but I knew nothing of classical music except *Messiah*.

Since then, through the medium of the gramophone, I have acquired a love of classical music and can appreciate the best. At first, I will admit, some of it was just noise, but I liked much of it,

and I gradually came to understand it and love it. I now have a good collection of records, and they are the joy of my life. They include five of Beethoven's symphonies, half a dozen of Mozart's as well as the whole of his opera *The Magic Flute*. Besides those, I have works by Bach, Schubert, Berlioz, Dvorak, as well as short works by many other first-class composers; and what is most important, I believe I can appreciate them, although I can't talk much about their technicalities.

There is another question, too. Where can anyone hear any but a few of the classical composers except on records? True, we have the National Orchestra, but how many of the great compositions can we hear from them? Two or three in a season perhaps, but there are many we can never hear. When was Beethoven's Ninth Symphony given in New Zealand? I hope your correspondent may revise her opinion and admit there may be something in radio or gramophone music.

H.O. (Tawa Flat).

## "ADVENTURES OF CLARA CHUFF"

Sir,—Being intrigued by your article on a new children's feature, namely, *The Adventures of Clara Chuff*, I tuned in to its first throes the other evening. As I listened, I tried to guess who could be responsible for the almost consistent shouting of the dialogue, the feeble imitations of the more elementary English dialects, the clumsy, ill-managed sound effects, and the dull, plodding, unoriginal, uninspired and completely unsuitable routine production. Sad to say, "produced by the New Zealand Broadcasting Service" at the end conveniently shrouded the identity of the participants and the producer. Well may they hide behind this "blanket credit" in shame! The script appears to be one of those imported from the BBC, and it might be suggested that a better compliment could have been paid to its source by postponing its production indefinitely.

FORTY-FIFTY (Wellington).

## SIMPLICITY IN PLANNING

Sir,—Perhaps your correspondent "E.J.C." was untimely with his criticism of Mr. Sowerby's planning, as the two so-called "major errors" were righted in each of the three succeeding of the four designs submitted. In my opinion, the wall in the laundry considered "extravagant" has three useful purposes, viz., (1) separate laundry; (2) serves as back entrance porch; and (3) contributes to dining recess in kitchen. Regarding the sink, perhaps it could be placed, with permission of the designer, under the window as suggested by "E.J.C." as the sink bench appears to be "returned."

The purpose of this letter is not so much to answer criticism as to commend the articles of Mr. Sowerby. I feel sure, Sir, that your reading public will be very appreciative of the articles, which have explained and described so well.

A. VICTOR SMITH (Johnsonville).

## ART IN WESTLAND

Sir,—There are several points in your article "Art in Westland" which I would like to take up with Mr. Woollaston. First, he states that "Nature is not something to be used in place of vision." If he means that one should refrain from reproducing faithfully every blade of grass or rusty garbage tin in a scene taken from Nature, then I am in complete agreement. If, however, he means that the presence of the garbage tin justifies the deliberate distortion of natural ob-

jects, then I am, most emphatically, not with him. If good drawing, as well as good painting, is unnecessary in a work of art, it would be much better to ignore form completely. As a case in point, the reproduction of "Greymouth with Tower" is suggestive of nothing but the results of a major earthquake. While the colour treatment may be admirable, the giving of "a local habitation and a name" to such a work causes such distraction and annoyance to those familiar with the subject that the possible virtues are overlooked.

The explanation of his "construction of space" also calls for some amplification. The meaning of the phrase, "movement and tension relations between planes and volumes" is, to put it mildly, obscure. If an explanation is thought to be necessary, then at least some attempt should be made to give it in simple language. As it is, one is left wondering if Mr. Woollaston knows what he means.

If Mr. Woollaston can be persuaded to clarify some of the points mentioned above, for the benefit of Philistines and laymen, I am sure that his remarks will be read with interest.

A. G. RICHARDS (Wellington).

## CHARLES DICKENS

Sir,—Your editorial of February 19 ("The Fame of Dead Writers") referred to Charles Dickens, and the uproar recently caused by certain disclosures. Your allusion was merely a passing reference, otherwise you would, I know, have added that the graver charge against Dickens has by no means been proved.

A.H.R. (Dunedin).

## "THE SEEKERS"

Sir,—The picture on the cover of *The Listener* dated February 26, of a shot from *The Seekers*, has filled us with forebodings as to the nature and quality of this film, which we are so soon to see. The German-Japanese Laya Raki, although doubtless a talented actress, has most un-Maori-like features, and her Hollywood attitude, with its self-conscious exposure of leg, is an insult to the very individual charm of many Maori women.

We, who sign this letter, hale from England, but nevertheless we count it a shame that a British film should appear to be so out-of-tune with its subject matter. Is the original fault in the book or in the film?

HELEN E. TAYLOR,  
MARGARET A. WARD  
(Wellington).

Sir,—May I inquire, through your columns, why no New Zealand composer was invited to write the background music for the above-named motion picture? I could name at least half a dozen New Zealand musicians capable of composing a score. It seems the height of absurdity—to say nothing of discourtesy—that a film should be made in New Zealand while its musical accompaniment is written by somebody overseas.

L. D. AUSTIN  
(Wellington).

(The film was made more in England than in New Zealand. Only the location work was done in this country.—Ed.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS  
*Partheus* (Lower Hutt).—Your letter was unsigned.

E.G. (Dunedin).—It was published in *China*.

*Concerned Observer* (Drury).—Have passed it on, as you suggested.