

## FLUORIDATION

Sir,—Dr. H. B. Turbott has pooh-poohed the misgivings of people in Hastings and Havelock North who object to the fluoridation of their borough water supply. I would like, briefly, to say why, having tried it, 4700 of them have signed a petition demanding its discontinuance.

1. The Hastings Borough Council was induced by the local dental society to undertake the addition of sodium fluoride to the water as an "experiment" to show its effect on children's teeth in comparison with those of Napier. The Council did this without the consent of the people, believing the fluoride to be "harmless and not noticeable."

2. Fluorine is a poisonous element, the most active of the non-metals. The margin between its safe usage and danger point is too narrow to make it suitable for mass medication of the people. Some are more sensitive to it than others, some quite allergic. Copious water drinkers can get too much, and it can be condensed by evaporation in cooking. If one part per million seems to benefit children's teeth, two parts may cause mottling and pitting of teeth and five parts may result in fluorosis (hardening of the bones).

When conveyed to every part of the body, fluorine can have effects quite beyond present medical knowledge.

3. Many people are complaining of ill-effects, especially of a feeling of burning and rawness in the mouth and digestive troubles, which cease when non-medicated water is used, and recommence on return to the fluoridated supply. Hundreds are drawing water from wells, tanks, and some doubtful sources in order to avoid fluorine. We believe there is no guarantee that the effects of fluorine are not cumulative with delayed action.

4. People resent authoritative methods. Whatever the value of a medicine may be, the individual citizen has the right to say "I don't want it."

We believe the whole trouble could be solved by making use of sodium fluoride optional. Goitre has been brought under control by the optional use of iodine in table-salt. Some similar arrangement could be devised for making fluorine available for those people who want it.

F. C. RUSH-MONRO, President,  
Hastings Anti-Fluoridation Society.

## HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES

Sir,—This is just a short note in appreciation of the Children's Holiday Programme, which all members of our family enjoyed. "The Adventures of the Worm" was so well done that it could find a place on any programme.

Just one thing, though—is the man who suggested making dolls' furniture out of corks and matches a father? I felt towards him as I do to the manufacturers of fish tins. They should be made to open their own tins and he should be made to make his own dolls' furniture. Apart from this one little "beef," long may the Holiday Programme arrangers be blessed.

M.V.L. (Christchurch).

## "THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK"

Sir,—Now the layman becomes utterly confused. Used to bemoaning the fact that the literati are obscure, and leaving it at that, he is faced with deciding whether they are so profound as to be unrecognisable as such, or merely empty vessels. In short, when T. S. Eliot remarks "I am I," is he proclaiming the simple fact that needs no explanation to a child of five, or is he, equally credibly, discoursing among the highest

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

planes of philosophy? The most intricate pathways reach the simplest of conclusions. Is thought of any value if too obvious in the first place? The layman might be better pleased with profundity that is recognisable. And the critic surely needs some guide—for interpretation, if too esoteric, is of little value.

One is reminded of Virginia Woolf, who wrote: "Understanding... has become the main art of speech in an age when words are growing daily so scanty in comparison with ideas that 'the biscuits ran out' has to stand for kissing a Negress in the dark when one has just read Bishop Berkeley's philosophy for the tenth time. (And from this it follows that only the most profound masters of style can tell the truth, and when one meets a simple one-syllabled writer, one may conclude, without any doubt at all, that the poor man is lying.)"

PAUL HENDERSON (Christchurch).

Sir,—May I support your reviewer in his estimate of *The Confidential Clerk* as a play to read? It is tedious, and in places trivial; the lesson it is intended to convey is carried by too flimsy a structure; and the infusion of poetry is about equal to the proportion of fluorine required in drinking water for our health. I am sure that had it been written by anyone but T. S. Eliot, it could never have been accepted for the theatre.

This last opinion is expressed by a critic in the American *Saturday Review* after seeing a stage production. He admires Eliot as a poet and a critic, but thinks little of this play, and his comment on Eliot's disciples is diverting. "In him the double-domes have found a stately pleasure dome; in his poems and plays, a sacred river which runs through caverns measureless to man, down to a sunless sea. The more 'swaddled with darkness his meaning, the greater their delight.'"

I learn from this critic that a religious symbolism has been suggested: Act I is the Father; Act II the Son; and Act III the Holy Ghost. I wonder if Mr. Eliot has discovered this himself. There is an old story—whether authentic or not I don't know—about Browning being asked by a reader what a certain passage meant, and replying that he had forgotten, but probably the secretary of the Browning Society could oblige. And there are the *Punch* verses on certain aspects of Shakespearian criticism:

I dreamt last night that Shakespeare's ghost  
Sat for a civil service post.  
The English paper of the year  
Contained a question on "King Lear,"  
Which Shakespeare answered very badly  
Because he hadn't studied Bradley.

This is rather rough on A. C. Bradley's admirable work *Shakespearean Tragedy*, but the satirist is licensed. Perhaps if Mr. Eliot were examined on his own work, he would do equally badly, because he hadn't read the *New Statesman*.

A.M. (Wellington).

## "GENEVIEVE"

Sir,—Your reviewer "Jno." has obviously missed the point in his review of the J. Arthur Rank release *Genevieve*. Whether this is due to lack of a sense of humour, or lack of an appreciation that there are various types of comedy, only "Jno." can tell; but I suspect it is the latter.

Joyce Grenfell's appearance as the boarding-house keeper was certainly funny and a highlight of the film, but a highlight only because it was an isolated piece of character comedy surrounded by comedy of situation. The

point "Jno." seems to have missed is that the film gets its laughs because the other players he mentions "are not really comic in themselves"; had they tried to be, the film would have been singularly unfunny and a complete burlesque.

P.M.S. (Wellington).

## POETRY IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—As I was meditating today upon your correspondence columns, the following verses fell into shape in my mind. They may be of interest to your readers:

*I remember, I remember,  
In my unregenerate teens  
I wrote of mountain scenery,  
Of buried kings and queens:  
The verses on the whole were flat,  
On crutches they did sprawl,  
For woman, lovely woman,  
Had no part in them at all.*

*But when I came to college  
And a share of man's estate  
To a bonny black-eyed beauty  
My soul did gravitate.  
The rhymes came running heel-and-toe  
As to the dinner-gong,  
For woman, lovely woman,  
Was the subject of my song.*

*A man may be a fool, I grant,  
To dangle in despair  
From a lady's golden bangle  
By a thread of silken hair;  
But let him leave the jades, he'll find  
His dictionary no use,  
For woman, lovely woman,  
Is the mother of the Muse.*

*A few among the blessed Saints,  
A very, very few,  
Wrote real verse: they generally  
Had better things to do.  
But pious poets by the score  
Clutter our local scene;  
For woman, lovely woman,  
They do not care a bean.*

*The lasses, I have heard it said,  
Are serpents in disguise,  
Yet they soothe our fractious intellects  
With dreams of Paradise.  
Though for our improprieties  
In Purgatory we smart,  
Yet woman, lovely woman,  
Is the paragon of Art.*

*My blessing on you, G.H.D.,  
And Mr. Reid likewise,  
Who look upon our errant youth  
With trouble in your eyes:  
I would not contradict you  
From contrariness or spite,  
But woman, lovely woman,  
Is the reason why I write.*

JAMES K. BAXTER (Wellington).

## ABOUT THE MANTIS

Sir,—In *The Listener* for April 9 "Sundowner's" remarks about the praying (or preying) mantis interested me greatly. Speaking of the "egg-case," he asks, "Could a mantis complete its task in six or seven hours?" About 30 years ago I watched a mantis performing that task and was much impressed. This was in China, and the mantis was nearly three inches in length and about three-quarters of an inch across her folded wings. The Chinese say that she must devour six or seven males before she is ready to lay her eggs. For this reason, and because of her voracious appetite, many people say "preying" is the right spelling. When first observed, Mrs. Mantis had already made fully half an inch of her egg-case. Her method was to

place a layer of eggs and secretion and after a few minutes move forward, fanning and patting the layer with her wings. When hard enough she backed and deposited another layer. Each layer took from 10 to 15 minutes. Three hours later the job was finished—the case fully two inches long and more than half an inch wide.

It is with regret that I have to say the hatching out of the young ones was not seen. A.R. (Auckland).

## AVIATION MATTERS

Sir,—Your issue of April 30 had some misleading statements on aircraft matters. The claim that the first retractable undercarriage appeared on the Airspeed Courier is quite incorrect. If you glance at a 1930 copy of Jane's *All the World's Aircraft* you will find therein a photo of the Boeing Monomail production transport with retractable undercarriage. At this time the Airspeed company was not even founded. Also, in writing on the Comet, where did your correspondent get the idea that turbine failures have never been known to occur? Blades have flown out of turbo jets hundreds of times and done plenty of damage in doing so. FACTS (Belfast).

(The Airspeed Courier was the first British commercial plane to use a retractable undercarriage. And although there have been turbine failures, they are not known to have happened with the Ghost engine of the Comet discussed in the article.—Ed.)

## NEW RECORDINGS

Sir,—On behalf of the members of its various affiliated societies my Federation wishes to express its great appreciation of two NZBS programmes which have been of great value to collectors of gramophone records. The programmes are: (a) *Hearing is Believing*—Owen Jensen; (b) *The New Records*—John Gray. They have been given over the YC network. We feel that the NZBS has in these programmes given good and valuable service to a section of the public.

We are also pleased to see that a new series of programmes featuring new releases in this country is being prepared for all X class stations. This series should also be most interesting and informative.

R. A. B. HUNTER,  
Hon. Secretary, N.Z. Federation of  
Recorded Music Societies.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

M.B.S. (Henderson).—Too long.  
Radiata (Whakarewarewa).—Admitted, sorrowfully; trying to overcome difficulties of recent origin.

G. T. Coombes (Balclutha).—Hard words, unjustified by the facts. Impossible to edit broadcasts not received. Cabled reports were specially commissioned. The first two, covering the first and second days' play, arrived together, were broadcast in the 12.30 link on May 4, and repeated that evening; the third, completing the report, was broadcast at 12.30 and 7.0 on May 5.

Why Shout? (Auckland).—An energetic, lively style is generally approved and held to be effective, though it can be overdone.

E. B. Hay (Auckland).—A management is entitled to adapt seating arrangements to circumstances as they vary from occasion to occasion. Beyond that, (1) the seats referred to were not reserved for day sales but available to be booked at the stated price; (2) uncertainty at the booking office is inexplicable, as the plan was clearly marked and had been discussed; (3) inquiry at 12B is not recalled, in particular not by the officer to whom such inquiries are normally referred; and he would not have given the reply quoted. The misunderstanding is regretted. If you call on the District Accountant, he will be glad to clear up any detail.

Hi-Fi (Wellington).—The equalisers used with the pick-ups are designed from the recording response figures given by the manufacturers for correct reproduction. As you may find occasion, please let 2YA know of examples; they will be investigated.