

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

## A HORRID WARNING

Sir,—If Mr. Bruce Mason would abstain from belittling the work of others in cheap journalism, and offer some constructive criticism, then he would deserve the title of "critic." I am indifferent to his ridicule and if my defence of what I know to be right makes enemies for me, I am in good company.

To Mr. Pocock I would say this. The theatre is a commercial undertaking, and the only test of a play, or any theatrical production, is Box Office. I have been associated with the theatre professionally, in all its branches, for the better part of my life. I come from a long line of theatrical ancestors. My experience in matters theatrical covers a wide field in four continents, and I claim to have some authority.

It is too bad that most of the world is out of step except Mr. Pocock (and Mr. Mason). Mr. Pocock is apparently of the opinion that it is only the pseudo-intellectual who is qualified to judge a play, and he obviously does not believe that "vox populi, vox Dei." The fact that Shakespeare can still draw packed houses while Ibsen cannot get a hearing proves, according to Mr. Pocock, that Ibsen is greater than Shakespeare, who writes, "Some other doses of pap," and the followers of the Bard ought to be ashamed of themselves.

My abuse of the critic was not because he "pits his judgment against that of others," but because he indulges in cheap sarcasm without a vestige of criticism, couched in an offensive journalistic style that is only worthy of the contempt it received. Mr. Pocock's denunciation of the majority makes me feel that because the world acclaims Edison as a genius, Mr. Pocock and his like prefer the illumination of candles and paraffin lamps. Mr. Pocock must realise the difference between theatre and amateur repertory. And let me, in turn, issue a horrid warning. If amateur repertory as represented by Messrs. Pocock and Mason claims the sole right to civilised intellect and despises the commercial theatre, then their intellectual snobbery will be the doom of such repertory. The first function of the theatre is to entertain—not cater for the long-haired intellectual. I am happy to say that by no stretch of imagination could I ever be called "long-haired." The sooner it is realised that the theatre exists primarily to entertain, the sooner will the theatre in New Zealand start to flourish.

L. ASSHETON HARBORD  
(Lower Hutt).

## LISPING IN NUMBERS

Sir,—A number of points can be made against the sour, plaintive editorial in *The Listener* of July 16. To begin with, it is destructive criticism and, as such, does no service to letters in this country. Criticism does not completely ignore the contents of a periodical while quibbling about the contents of a handbill announcing it.

I understand perfectly what the *Numbers* editorial means when it says that "New Zealand is rapidly taming any artist..." etc. This paragraph points out an admitted fact, that the frankly materialist standards held in this country do not allow for any art that does not conform.

The quip about "personal frustrations" reminds one of Allen Curnow's

remarks about Rimbauds and Baudelaires in *Here and Now* (May, 1952). These same critics, I take it, do not deny some literary merit to the afore-said Rimbaud and Baudelaire.

I fail to see what "internal evidence" there is of a coterie behind *Numbers*, especially as, among the other contributors, I have met only four, and the remainder are from places a long way from Wellington.

There are not, emphatically not, enough sources of publication of a periodical nature for literature and the arts. For example, of the verse-publishing magazines in New Zealand, *Landfall* alone publishes any quantity of verse which is also reasonable in quality, but should the kind of verse that's published be decided by one editor only?

The comparison of this editorial with a *Times* "fourth leader" shows a misconception of the lightness of touch in the latter. The footnote to the *Numbers* Editorial Committee's letter I found rather carping and trivial. It still leaves room to appeal for a worthwhile standard of criticism.

CHARLES DOYLE (Wellington).

Sir,—A shrill editorial attack such as you indulged in at the expense of a new literary venture must surely be unique. Your criticism was not even based on the contents of the first issue, but on the aims of the journal as expressed in a publicity leaflet.

There is not such a wealth of cultural activity in this country that further enterprise in the publishing field is redundant. On the contrary: and one would expect from you, in your semi-official capacity, benevolent patronage and encouragement rather than scorn and derision.

R. GOODMAN (Auckland).

("Scorn and derision?" Yet it cannot be surprising if a correspondent who says that our criticism was based on "the aims of the journal as expressed in a publicity leaflet" should use words as recklessly as he reads them.—Ed.)

## "PASSPORT TO PIMLICO"

Sir,—The tempo and spirit of *Passport to Pimlico* as broadcast on Sunday, July 4, was a credit to all concerned. The whole was sustained throughout at a very high level.

MUM AND DAD (Napier).

## NOISES IN THE NIGHT

Sir,—Your delightful article on "Noises in the Night" exemplifies "Toleration" as so ably discussed by the BBC on the YC stations. Toleration is defined as co-existing with something we do not like, and the snores of the protecting male must be interpreted satisfactorily if they are to be endured. My own attitude is that snoring is a mild form of self-gratification on the part of one who likes to make himself heard without a rival. In the day Mother sings round the house, the lad whistles on his bicycle, uncle fiddles with his moustache, and at night Father hums through his uvula.

DUTIFUL WIFE (Christchurch).

## MR. HARRY ELL

Sir,—I am collecting material for the biography of the late Mr. Harry Ell, of Christchurch. If any of your readers would be able to supply information, or in any way help me with this, I would be very grateful.

LENORE OAKLEY,  
77 Dyers Pass Road, Cashmere,  
Christchurch.

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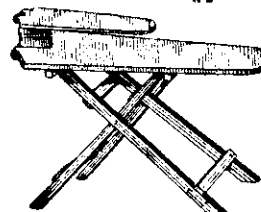


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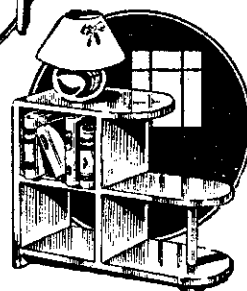


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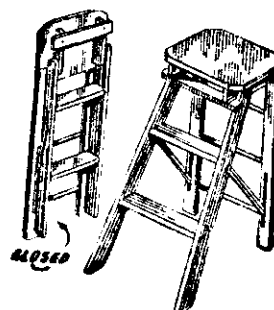
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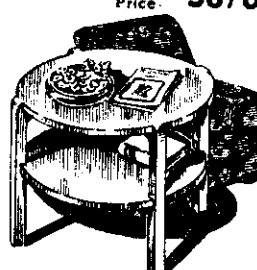
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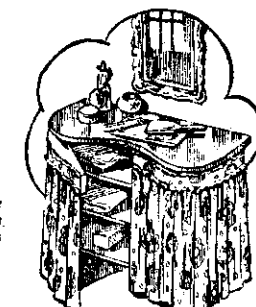
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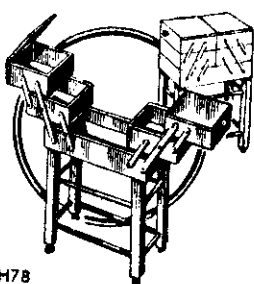
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