

## "TOURIST IN TAKAKA"

Sir,—The article written by Lawrence Constable, "Tourist in Takaka," contains so many inaccuracies that it cannot be left unchallenged. Most of the article gives a distorted picture of Takaka, and some of it is half true and some is definitely not true. It can be assumed that Mr. Constable spent a few hours in our town, accepted the hospitality for which Takaka is renowned and rushed off this article about a place of which he had learned as much as Takaka learned of him.

The dusty road over the hill is the Richmond-Collingwood State Highway and, except for about a quarter of a mile at Richmond, the road is sealed the 70 miles from Nelson to Takaka. The town area is certainly built on a triangle and is a little over two miles round the block, not three. Mr. Constable was probably travelling too fast to notice the three side streets branching off from the main one.

Ask any experienced traveller if it is not fact that all the hotel proprietors go out of their way to make their guests comfortable in a homely way. I lived four and a half years at the hotel referred to in the article, and have done business with the other two, so am in a position to be quite sure of the friendly character of these people.

The comment concerning the pictures in the lounges, is, I think, in the worst possible taste. There are two pictures of the proprietor's parents of whom he might be justly proud. One of them is of a splendid gentleman, taken in former years, who has had this hotel for 34 years, and who, after passing his three score years and ten, had the tenacity and faith in Takaka personally to supervise and work on the rebuilding of the hotel after the disastrous fire four years ago. The other picture is of a very gracious lady admired and honoured by all those who knew her.

It might be mentioned that plans were drawn for the new hotel over a year before the fire occurred. The innuendo contained in the paragraph about the proprietor's toilet accessories left in the bathroom is definitely not true as he and his family occupy a private suite which Mr. Constable has never seen.

The "Breath of Life" to be obtained from the "fascinating" proposed Coast Road would leave even Mr. Constable cold. It can breathe up to sixty miles per hour quite frequently. This road would certainly open up some good country, also a considerable area of very bad land. And the cost would be such that no Minister of Works would sanction it. Takaka as a whole has managed to survive for about a century on its old breath, and most of the residents can struggle along without this proposed new one.

The score of shops in the town area actually totals 32. There are eleven commercial offices, not including "the plentiful shipping offices," which total up to the colossal number of two.

It is rather amazing that although Mr. Constable could not see anyone on the streets between noon and two p.m. (and there are plenty of them) he could see a lorry under a cloud of dust, travelling on a sealed road at Pohara Beach.

It is hard to understand the reference made about Miss McCallum's eels and people known to Mr. Constable. He probably associates with a different type of people from what we are, so no further comment is called for. In conclusion, visitors to Takaka can rest assured that there is never any cheating

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

at the pictures either Wednesday, Friday or Saturday, and that a warm welcome awaits all those who visit our contented little town.

GEO. T. WILLOUGHBY (Takaka).

(Mr. Constable replies: "As the unashamed tourist I called myself in the title, let me say that: the whole Takaka side of the hill was far from sealed when I crossed it late in November; the new pub in the town is topnotch; there is dust on either side of the tar-sealed bit at Pohara; and the five small shipping companies with their nameplates out for business (albeit in two offices) were still a surprise to a city slicker. Admitted the chances are remote of the Heaphy Track ever becoming a road, but mainly because we are so thick with scenic possibilities and so thin of people. I am sorry the correspondent has mistaken the whole spirit of what I wrote. It isn't necessary to spend a lifetime in Takaka to be impressed by its warmth, friendliness and contentment. I liked it a lot."—Ed.)

## CHRISTOPHER FRY'S PLAY

Sir,—Your correspondent, L. Assheton Harbord writes "that the Stratford Players are not regarded as 'tops' in England . . . the regular Company is not at all outstanding," etc. I can only presume that he has not seen this Company of recent years.

In 1948 the Company included Robert Helpmann, Esmond Knight, Anthony Quayle, Paul Schofield, Claire Bloom, Diana Wynyard and Heather Stannard. The name of Edmund Purdom appeared in small parts and walk-ons.

In 1949 Godfrey Tearle, Leon Quartermaine, Anthony Quayle, Harry Andrews, Michael Gwynn, William Squire, Edmund Purdom and Diana Wynyard were in the Company. In 1950, besides John Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft, there were Alan Badel, Harry Andrews, Andrew Cruickshank, Leon Quartermaine, Rosalind Atkinson, Barbara Jefford and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies. It is worth noting that in 1950 Sir John Gielgud played Cassius in *Julius Caesar* with Barbara Jefford as Calpurnia. It is to our loss that Barbara Jefford did not also play her same role in the film version. Perhaps your correspondent has heard of some of these names, picked at random from the cast lists of those years?

Consulting *Shakespeare's Histories at Stratford, 1951*, by J. Dover Wilson and T. C. Worsley, I find the cast list containing such well-known names as those of Michael Redgrave, Alan Badel, Richard Burton, Anthony Quayle and again, Barbara Jefford.

The name of Christopher Fry is recognised by all authorities on post-war drama. They may or may not admire his style but no one denies his importance on the English stage. He has been compared with Anouilh, mentioned with Eliot and spoken of with Shakespeare.

Can anyone deny Bruce Mason's right to use superlatives when writing on his most successful play?

I shall always regret not having seen the original production but I have seen Pamela Brown play Ophelia, Claudia and Marie in *The River Line* and I can imagine her delightful performance as Jennet. However, I do not on this score value Barbara Jefford's less. Miss Jefford came 12,000 miles to play to us, not Miss Brown. M.J.B. (Rotorua).

Sir,—So Christopher Fry doesn't write good theatre! From what dizzy pinnacle on what theatrical Olympus does your correspondent make this astonishing assertion? New Zealand must take its plays as and if it finds them, but to make general assertions from this rather meagre evidence concerning the ability of the author is surely exceeding the bounds of reasonable judgment.

The receipt of royalties from three simultaneous West End productions should be some consolation to an author accused of being theatrically ineffective, but in case this recent record is attributed solely to the high standard of performance I would add my own personal experience when participation in several of his plays in less exalted places brought no evidence of empty seats or lack of audience enthusiasm.

Does *The Lady* lack point? For those who can't taste the pill for the sugar I would suggest a restraining of assumptions until the opportunity arises of seeing *The First Born*, *The Dark is Light Enough*, or what may well be the greatest play written in recent times, *A Sleep of Prisoners*.

Much of Fry's poetical symbolism will be strange to New Zealanders, but this is hardly the author's fault. The imaginative richness of *The Lady* was mainly responsible for freeing the English theatre from its wartime bondage of pseudo-realism. The commercial success of the play showed that poetry and pence can go together, thereby easing the path of such as Whiting, Hunter and Philp, whose work New Zealand may also see one day.

KEN WHITE (Tauranga).

## SOCIETY AND HAPPINESS

Sir,—To reappear within the purview of an old friend, after being out of touch for several years, in the form of an assailant in a literary free-for-all, must cause regret; however I feel I cannot allow to pass unchecked James K. Baxter's recent remarks under this head. First, his terms are distressingly vague—not at all necessary even for a poet, for compare Lucretius or Demetrius, to say nothing of Ovid and his "On Paint-

ing the Face"; poets can be exact in their usage. What does Mr. Baxter intend by "Society"? All very well calling it "that mechanical mother we have invented for ourselves," but that but adds confusion to the doubt and clarifies not at all. Now, there is a term, employed exactly by social anthropologists, and which I believe conveys the sense intended by Mr. Baxter when he used his all-embracing and naught-retaining "Society"; that word is "Culture."

Although bitter arguments go on between such rival schools of social anthropology as the Structuralists, Functionalists and Configurationists, none of them has, I am certain, ever envisaged culture as a man-invented mechanical mother, nor is it likely that one ever will. Culture (a human group together with the totality of its environment forming one whole) is a dynamic, functioning organism, in which each part is illimitably interactively correlated with all other parts, and each is necessary for the functioning of the whole.

Mankind and culture are inseparable, and culture always implies some socially recognised forms of inter-human relationships within the culture. The types of such relations vary very markedly from such extremes as: One group serving another as a special ceremonial food-supply; in-law avoidance; organised homo-sexuality; and open enmity, to a profiteering minority; religious semi-withdrawal; or a complete sex in a subservient state to the other.

The happiness of the individual depends upon his degree of adaptation to the needs of the efficient functioning of his particular culture. Each person is conditioned by precept of his elders, by experiences, etc., as nearly as possible into the individual-type best suited to enter into those dynamic interactions which are the functions of his culture. The nearer the efficiency ideal, the more exact the adaptation, the less stress and friction, and the greater the happiness; and vice versa.

GUY POWELL (Auckland).

## THE WEEK'S MUSIC

Sir,—At the risk of seeming captious concerning your contributor "Sebastian," I must protest strongly against his use of vulgar slang in *The Listener* of February 25. Referring to the performance, at Dunedin, of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, he stated that both soloist, Maurice Till, and the orchestra, "let their hair well down"—whatever that may mean. Of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, "Sebastian" wrote: "The latter was a bit soupy—duck soup, at that—after its nature."

May I point out, Sir, that the first requirement of an authoritative critic is clarity of expression; second, reasonable command of the Queen's English; third, dignity of style. If his meaning is not clear, the reader cannot assess the value of his judgment; if he descends to the use of slang, he lowers the prestige of his calling; if he shows disrespect to the acknowledged masters of music, he is obviously unfitted for his job. Serious musicians are perturbed by this incongruous tone of fatuous flippancy in *The Listener's* musical reviews, and I venture to predict that its continuance may alienate many of our subscribers.

L. D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

(We venture to predict that our subscribers, whatever they may think of "Sebastian," will not desert us while they are able to read Mr. Austin.—Ed.)

## DOMINION PIPE BANDS CONTEST

NZBS stations will give extensive coverage to the Dominion Pipe Bands Championship Contest to be held at Auckland from Friday, March 18, to Sunday, March 20. One of the local National stations and 12B will broadcast results as soon as possible after they are available; on Friday and Saturday afternoons 1YC will relay from Carlaw Park; and at 9.30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 9.15 p.m. on Sunday 1YA will broadcast recordings of contest performances.

Listeners in other parts of the country will hear results from YA and YZ stations on Friday at 7.0 p.m. and 11.15 p.m. (YA's and 4YZ only), on Saturday at 6.15 a.m. (YA's only), 7.18 a.m., 8.10 a.m., 7.0 p.m. and 11.15 p.m. (YA's and 4YZ only), and on Sunday at 6.15 a.m. (YA's only), 7.18 a.m., 8.10 a.m., 6.40 p.m. (except 4YZ) and 11.15 p.m. (YA's and 4YZ only). Commercial stations will broadcast results on these days as soon as convenient after they are available.

Recorded winning performances from the contest will be heard from YA stations, 3YZ and 4YZ at 9.30 p.m. on Monday, March 21; and contest recordings will also be heard later from other National and Commercial stations.