

"ART IS NEVER EASY"

Sir,—Reviewing E. H. McCormick's excellent book on Frances Hodgkins, *The Expatriate*, W. B. Sutch says: "Mr. McCormick says, and we can all agree, that New Zealand has not earned the right to be proud of Frances Hodgkins." One knows only too well what the reviewer means—but perhaps it should not be left there. For it is equally evident that New Zealand has done little more towards earning the right to be proud of Katherine Mansfield . . . nor, for that matter, of Peter Buck, another notable expatriate mentioned in the review. Least of all, has our country earned the right to be proud of those writers and artists still living, as best they may, endeavouring to develop their creative powers in face of public apathy.

For it is true that a small number of New Zealanders admire the work of Miss Hodgkins. There would have been, also, a small number willing to support works of Miss Mansfield while she lived—just as there are some prepared to support our struggling arts today. But these three or four hundred are not New Zealand—their taste is not New Zealand's. In social terms, New Zealand does not even deserve the art it gets: but perhaps those terms are idle—impossible to operate. The response to art—like its creation—is individual. Perhaps we should stop using phrases like "the taste of New Zealand" and cease to refer to New Zealand art. There isn't any—there is only individual creative vision.

LOUIS JOHNSON (Wellington).

THE CUCKOO IN THE NEST

Sir,—In the article under the above title in your February 18 number, Helen Wilson mentions hearing Dr. R. A. Falla answering a question over the air in a children's session about how a cuckoo manages to place its egg in the nest of a small bird. I think this must have been the Wednesday "Nature Question Time" session from 2YA on December 22 last at which Dr. Falla did, in fact, answer a question, from Malcolm Anderson of Henderson, Auckland, on this subject. My Society organises this series of sessions and I was at the table, in my capacity of Weka the questionmaster, with Dr. Falla at the session referred to. I was expecting him to mention another observation reported some years ago to my Society and published in its journal *Forest and Bird*, but he told me afterwards that he could not remember the details clearly enough. Helen Wilson's article may have whetted your readers' interest and they may like to hear about this other observation.

Mr. H. J. Payne, of Wairoa, while on shepherding duties, used to boil his billy in one spot every day and while there watched a grey warbler day by day building its nest, three eggs being finally laid on successive days. On the fourth day he saw a bird fly straight to the grey warbler's nest and on closer investigation saw a shining cuckoo actually in the nest with its bill sticking out of the opening. After about two minutes the shining cuckoo emerged and Mr. Payne saw a fourth egg in the nest, slightly bigger and of a different colour. The shining cuckoo, a very much smaller bird than the long-tailed cuckoo, could probably squeeze into a grey warbler's nest without doing much damage, if any.

Helen Wilson's story of a long-tailed cuckoo with an egg in a wattle at the side of its head from which a passage apparently went to the mouth is most

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interesting, and will add to the sum of the observations, gradually building on a process on which no scientist will as yet give a definite pronouncement. There have been other reports from time to time of observations of both methods of inserting eggs into other birds' nests by cuckoos—by carrying the egg in the bill and by actual laying. These reports have been too few as yet to establish definitely what is the usual method.

One thing in Helen Wilson's article calls for a note of warning—the shooting of the long-tailed cuckoo. Quite apart from the fact that the cuckoos are, and were under the old Act also, absolutely protected birds, one cannot view these parasitizing actions from the human viewpoint and nature should not be interfered with, except where it has got out of balance through man's initial interference. Man may regard such usurpation as cruel but, after the first registering of fear or anger at the approach of the marauder to the vicinity of the nest, the birds do not appear to do so, else why should they feed the young cuckoo so assiduously? It is one of nature's inscrutable provisions, which we cannot hope to understand and must not endeavour to upset, particularly with a lethal weapon.

R. H. CARTER, Secretary, Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand.

"THESE NEW ZEALANDERS"

Sir,—In your February 4 issue you reviewed Robin W. Winks' *These New Zealanders*. On page 144, Mr. Winks goes on record to say: "Perhaps it is obvious to New Zealanders where Lambton Quay is, but it is confusing to visitors. I have never seen a street sign on Lambton Quay in Wellington."

New Zealanders are often berated for their unwillingness to "take" criticism. Nevertheless we are permitted to use our own eyes. Street signs in Lambton Quay may be seen by ordinary people, today, at the following places: 1. Opposite the Lambton tram terminal. 2. Corner of Bunny Street. 3. Corner of Molesworth Street. 4. Opposite the Memorial. 5. Corner of Bowen Street. 6. Corner of Ballance Street. 7. Corner of Waring Taylor Street. 8. Opposite the entrance to Brandon Street. 9. Corner of Grey Street. 10. In front of the Bank of New South Wales. 11. Opposite the Bank of New Zealand. There is also a prominent sign indicating the whereabouts of Lambton Quay Post Office.

To provide larger signs for the convenience of visiting motorists right on the corner of Customhouse Quay and Lambton Quay at the south end, and

similarly at the north end, where the Quay and Featherston Street join, might be a gracious act on the part of the City Council; but it would appear that Mr. Winks's observations have already startled our city fathers to an amazing degree. It is only a few months since our ever-alert visitor found the Quay empty. The eleven signs now visible are of the embossed metal plate variety and look permanent. Someone must have acted smartly to get them up in the time.

ERLE ROSE (Wellington).

LIGHT MUSIC

Sir,—In supporting wholeheartedly Mr. Price's very able plea for light music rather than animal noises when light music is on the official programme, especially during the morning sessions before 9.0 a.m., please allow me to press the following point. Whenever a Gallup Poll has been taken concerning the preferences of listeners, the poll has

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included all listeners. Now in the mornings those who enjoy crooning and jazz are listening to the commercial stations, where they are well catered for. Would it not be possible to discover the preferences of those who actually do listen to the National stations?

During the period, some few years ago, when the YA stations were giving short classical programmes between 7.20 a.m. and 8.0 a.m., many appreciative letters appeared in your pages. Would the Broadcasting Service not like to give its more discerning public a similar pleasure again?

RIGEL (Whangarei).

TAVERNS IN THE TOWNS

Sir,—I for one am shocked at the alarming increase in drinking in New Zealand, but your contention that this is directly attributed to six o'clock closing of hotels is an astonishing one. Is it not a fact that drinking and drunkenness are on the increase in almost all countries, in most of which, hotels are open for much longer hours than in this country? What about France, where the Government stresses as one of the foremost planks in its policy a drastic scheme for dealing with alcoholism, which is regarded as one of the greatest evils in that land? And in France they have hotel hours. *The Listener* would have here. Again, I would ask are our women not entitled to any consideration? Should they be compelled to stay at home every night,

while their lords and masters make merry in the "pubs?"

As one who has had sad experience of 10 o'clock closing of hotels in New Zealand, I unhesitatingly declare that to revert to 10 o'clock closing would be a retrograde step, and, possibly, a national calamity. Let me ask another pertinent question. If six o'clock closing is the cause of excessive drinking, as affirmed by *The Listener*, and an extension of the hours would lessen consumption, why is it that "The Trade" is fighting for 10 o'clock closing, and spending thousands of pounds to attain that end?

FRANK PENN (Auckland).

Sir,—As one of those simpletons who regard liquor as an evil, I was interested in your editorial, "Taverns in the Towns." I was struck chiefly by the unexpressed and undefended basic assumption that liquor may be regarded as harmless if only a few people are ruined by it. What would a court of law say to a plea that an accused person had robbed or murdered only a few, or even only one, of the people that he had met?

We who wish to see the liquor trade abolished do not claim that all drinkers become drunkards or criminals. What we do claim is that liquor does degrade some drinkers, does break up some homes, does cause some serious crimes and some needless loss of life on the roads. If these charges are true, very weighty arguments must be brought in its favour if it is to be saved from condemnation not only by sentimental women but by all responsible citizens. M.A. (Palmerston North).

SCHUBERT'S MUSIC

Sir,—I was amazed to find Schubert's Symphony No. 3 in D included in what was described, both in *The Listener's* advance programme lists, and by the announcer in introducing the work, as a programme of "Music of the late 18th Century" (2YC, Tuesday, February 22, 10.7-11 p.m.) The date of this symphony is 1815. The composer himself was not born until 1797 and hence could not, precocious though his genius admittedly was, have written much "music of the late 18th Century." To raise such an issue in your columns may perhaps be regarded by some as pedantic quibbling, but the distortion of chronology in this instance was surely too gross to let pass without protest.

A. C. McLEAN (Auckland).

MISSING RABBITS

Sir,—As a North Islander, I also shared "Sundowner's" feeling of "sensation" at seeing no rabbits in Central Otago during January of this year. The odd hare was even startling, and during the long trip south I had to keep the children interested by counting, of all things, hawks—which were certainly plentiful.

An ironic notice, whose words I remember imperfectly, struck an interesting note to a non-mainlander. I fancy some Southerner could complete it correctly. It was seen in Cardrona Valley, and said something to this effect: "In loving memory of the rabbits—who died in order that Station Owners might prosper."

I understand that after the depression of the twenties, farmers in this area obtained more per ton for their rabbit-skins than for their wool.

RABBITUARY OBITUARY? (Wellington).

A WORLD IN NEED

If a poor man came to you and asked for bread, would you give him a stone? If a poor nation knocks at our door and asks for help, for food, for clothing, for aid in producing these things for itself, what is the difference? When a band of countries right around the world is sick with poverty, what right have we to refuse help—we, the Anglo-Saxon nations, who account for 10 per cent. of its world's population and swallow up 60 per cent. of its goods? From YA and YZ stations a CORSO appeal talk will be heard at 6.40 p.m. on Wednesday, March 30. From the ZBs, 2ZA and 1XN on March 23 and 30, talks will be given between 2.30 and 3.30 by speakers who include Sir Edmund Hillary, Col. Dr. Bramwell Cook, of the Salvation Army, and Miss Alice Walton, a District Health Nurse, who spent some time in Indonesia under the Colombo Plan. The five talks in the CORSO appeal will begin from 3ZB on Wednesday, April 6, between 2.30 and 3.30. On Sunday, March 20, at 3.30 p.m., a documentary programme edited and narrated by Bryan O'Brien will be broadcast by ZB stations. It is called "A World in Need" and will include recordings sent from many different countries.