

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

RACE RELATIONS IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir.—James Ritchie, in criticising Dr. Winiata's radio talk, demands more field reports before discussion should take place. May I say that such reports cannot be regarded as the alpha and omega of an understanding of Maori affairs? The ones in existence, written by pakehas—from an outsider's point of view—are obviously coloured by the background of their compilers. The Hawera Survey, to which Mr. Ritchie contributed a section, part of which unscientifically and unlinguistically introduced a Maori glossary in non-phonetic script, only very superficially gives an outline of contemporary Maori society in an area where the policy of intensive assimilation was applied for specific reasons. Better if Mr. Ritchie had assisted Mr. Raureti, or some other local Maori student, to carry out the survey. The results would have been fuller and deeper than those obtained.

The reading of Dr. Winiata's script in *The Listener* will show that Mr. Ritchie's reference to the place of an illusion in the progressive development of the Maori people is quite irrelevant. However Dr. Winiata's interpretation that the Maori is under an illusion concerning pakeha interest in his culture, concerning, too, the status of his culture in New Zealand society, seems to be borne out by the tenor of Mr. Ritchie's letter, i.e., there is no Maori culture, though most Maoris continue to think there is.

Mr. Ritchie fails to practise his doctrine of saying something new when he harks back to a Socratic principle "Know yourself," which to him seems to form the cornerstone of progress. If Mr. Ritchie considers that the Western world today represents a higher stage of progress merely because it is technologically advanced, then he had better get hold of some other illusions. When a Maori looks out and sees increase in crime, child delinquency, high and low finance, political machinations both at the international and local levels, threats of human destruction with atom and H-bombs, and the subjugation of truth to expediencies—perhaps he may be pardoned for withholding his verdict.

Let Mr. Ritchie know himself, the pakeha, first. Let him make a thorough study of the psychological roots of the stereotyped and prejudiced thinking among pakehas concerning Maoris—then he will begin to understand something of the consequent reaction of the Maori as a group in New Zealand society.

MARAMA KOEA
(New Plymouth).

THACKERAY'S GREATNESS

Sir.—As a life-long admirer of Thackeray, may I say how pleased I was to read the review of *Thackeray, the Novelist*, by Geoffrey Tillotson—pleased with author and reviewer? Of recent years the new psychological criticism, with its detailed examination of temperament and relations with others, has been applied to Thackeray in England, and the result has been, in the operators' eyes, to whistle away a good deal of his stature. (And, going back, I may recall

Saintsbury's remark that critics could not forgive Arthur Pendennis for *not* seducing Fanny.)

Dickens has gone through a similar and more elaborate examination, but it does not seem to have affected his ranking on his popularity. Granted that Thackeray is the lesser genius, he has enough of that endowment to stand any analysis of his inhibitions and frustrations, and cataloguing of his faults. Your reviewer says some critics find him shallow, and see "no evidence of social conscience." This is a strange finding about the author of *The Book of Snobs*, the most formidable frontal attack ever delivered on the most besetting English sin. When Matthew Arnold remarked to a Japanese student visiting England that he could scarcely be expected to know *The Book of Snobs*, the Japanese replied: "Why, Mr. Arnold, it was that book that first gave me an insight into the English character."

The Book of Snobs strikes me as the one Dickensian book Thackeray wrote. Elsewhere his criticism of the social scene is subtle and oblique. But are we to suppose that the creator of the Marquis of Steyne, Major Pendennis, Rawdon Crawley, the elder Osborne, and Barnes Newcome, was satisfied with that world? However, as your reviewer says, it is the artist that matters. Think of Thackeray's range of characters, of such scenes as the unsurpassed openings of *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*, Rawdon Crawley's return from the debtors' prison, and the Waterloo chapters. Consider also his style, which to my mind is not equalled for clarity and grace by any other English novelist.

A.M. (Wellington).

LIGHT MUSIC

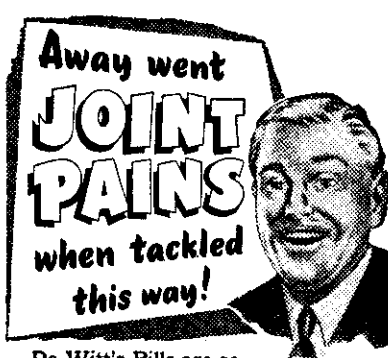
Sir,—“Syncopation” writes in your issue of April 1 as an advocate for jazz music, but in his attempt to make a case for it he reveals the quality of mind that goes with the jazz addict. It by no means follows that, because this sort of music was banned in Nazi Germany and likewise today under Communism, it is therefore good music. It would be just as sensible to argue that, because the head of a gang of burglars vetoed robbery with violence and homicide, such actions were therefore good and tolerable.

The reference to written jazz music is equally pointless. The writers and printers of this music, of course, use the same kind of symbols as Schubert used for his symphonies or Sullivan for his songs; and there the similarity ends. It may be admitted that there is sometimes an air or melody in a jazz composition that would be acceptable and pleasing to a cultivated ear. But too often the orchestration and instrumental rendering smothers the melody in a mass of cacophony. The trombones blare and seem to delight in augmenting the excruciating effect by playing a little flat. The saxophones grunt or squeal as if emulating a pig having its throat cut. The percussion adds its bumpety-bump. The penny squeakers and toy trumpets that used to afford some amusement to young children are resurrected. If success depends on producing something different from established musical standards the jazzers have achieved it—by perpetrating auditory irritants that afflict the senses and nauseate the mind. And when a vocalist comes into it he or she usually rivals and often beats the band in producing unpleasant sounds

apparently designed to convey the impression that the singer is very drunk.

Why has it become so prevalent and so popular? The explanation most probably lies in the fact that the majority of people never grow up mentally but retain in adult life the standards of taste and intellectual judgment that belong to the juvenile stage which is primitive and undiscriminating. This has been substantially demonstrated as a fact in the U.S.A., the original source of jazz. The market for music contains far more potential customers for the crude stuff that appeals to minds that are immature so far as aesthetic training and educated discrimination are concerned. Successful composers of good music, even those rare ones with inborn genius, must go through a course of disciplined training. They have to strive before they arrive. But jazz composing is relatively easy (much of it cribbed, with appalling mutilations appropriate to the purpose) and what is more, it is easier to sell, because there are far more people lacking in a cultivated musical taste (a process calling for some time and trouble) than otherwise; a condition that can be truly termed “the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” Yes, it is with us in the sphere of entertainment if not in the political world.

A University Professor of Jazz! Presumably for the Chair of Music Pathology. There's certainly scope for a serious study of this plague. Let us hope it may lead to the elimination of the septic symptoms that have too long afflicted and disfigured the body of popular music. A.E.H. (Dunedin).



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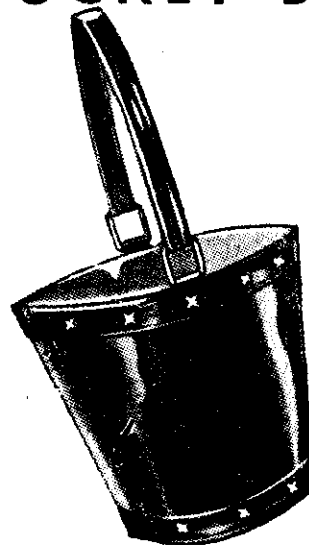
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