

BRITAIN AND WEST AFRICA

Sir,—I feel that the concluding remarks of the commentator on the *Lookout* programme for October 13 gave a misleading impression. In commenting on the return of Seretse Khama to Bechuanaland, he strongly criticised the British Government's handling of the trouble from the beginning, suggesting that it was influenced in this by the South African Government's hatred of "miscegenation." Then, for his final remark, he went on immediately to wonder what will happen when the Gold Coast attains independence next year. As the fixing of a date for Gold Coast self-government is not fresh news this week, and as he failed to comment on it any further, we can only assume that he wished to imply some connection between it and the Seretse Khama incident.

Does he imply a change of attitude towards West Africa by the British Government? This would be hard to substantiate, as there has been a consistent move towards granting the Gold Coast its independence since long before Seretse met his wife. Does he imply some trouble over marriage between black and white? I know a number of West Africans with European wives, but have never heard of any possibility of Government interference, so this also seems to be beside the point. Is his suggestion therefore that the British Government is likely to be influenced again by the South African Government? If so, it would demonstrate his ignorance of the position in West Africa, where the absence of large numbers of European settlers removes all possibility of the extreme troubles of South, and even East, Africa, and where even the most ardent nationalist does not question the honesty of the British, but wishes to quarrel—mainly with his own countrymen—about the timing and form of self-government.

If, on the other hand, he merely means, rather irrelevantly to his preceding thesis, that South Africa will disapprove of an independent Gold Coast (and Nigeria, too, in the near future), then he may well be right, but he should have made it clearer that this was the limit of his intention. It is worth noting, however, that the South African Government has allowed the completely African Government of Liberia to open a consulate in Capetown—not that this proves much.

K. L. McKAY (Wellington).

VICTORIA DE LOS ANGELES

Sir,—In the midst of the public hysteria and the brouhaha of your critics Sebastian and B.E.G.M., may I pose a few queries concerning the recent concerts of this artist?

1. Why do female singers persist in singing songs that were composed specifically for a male voice? In her first Auckland concert Los Angeles sang at least four lieder in this category.

2. Should a first-class lieder singer commit the solecism of taking such things as "Mein" and "Wohin" out of their proper context in the *Schöne Müllerin* cycle?

3. Lieder in general and most of the songs this singer gave us were composed for performance in a large room or small hall. Performed as they were in a large concrete barn with shabby acoustics to three thousand people, do they not lose much of their intimacy and appeal?

4. Is not the essence of lieder-singing an equal partnership between singer and pianist? Mr. Till, I felt, for the most part, merely kept in touch, so to speak, and rarely proclaimed his equality.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

5. When will the concert section of the NZBS seek competent typographical advice for its programme design? The Los Angeles programme printing was abominable.

6. Victoria de los Angeles sang in four languages; for one shilling this concert-goer expects either (a) a literal translation of the foreign text, (b) a précis thereof, or (c) a translation of the title. Is this an unreasonable expectation? Actually in one of the few cases where the annotator essayed a précis, "Ich Grolle Nicht," a completely wrong idea of the German text was given, so it may have been just as well nothing was done about the Italian and Spanish numbers.

CHAS. E. WARDLE (Hamilton).

Sir,—My thanks to the NZBS for allowing the "poor relations" in Christchurch to hear Victoria de los Angeles in person. The recital was marred only by the poor quality of the programme notes, which were particularly uninformative. For only one song was any clue to the meaning of the text provided. Surely it would have been possible to have provided translations, especially when so many of the songs were unfamiliar. In the Gluck and Lully arias some indication of the dramatic situation at least should have been supplied.

Some of the writers in *The Listener* appear to think that a Spanish singer is necessarily possessed of a fiery Latin temperament. A large proportion of Spanish artists have been noted more for grace, accuracy and a cool, classical style, than for Spanish "fire." This is certainly the case with Madame de los Angeles. *The Listener's* article, "Spanish Grace and Fire," would have made some sense if it had been written about Conchita Supervia. Incidentally, Caruso never broke a tumbler with his voice. The article was possibly the worst example yet of *The Listener's* chatty, familiar style.

Finally, congratulations to the NZBS for engaging such a fine singer. It is to be hoped that we may hear more good singers each season instead of a multitude of pianists with the same programmes.

ARLECCHINO
(Christchurch).

MARBLES BLINDLY ROLLING

Sir,—Mr. W. Holmes challenges my definition of "gambling" on the ground that "it hardly covers its full scope." My object in defining was, of course, to make sure that in any argument both sides should know precisely what they were arguing about. In regard to "playing the market," neither under my definition nor his own is it possible to say *a priori* whether this is "gambling" or not. The theory of all trading is that, in the production and distribution of commodities the margin is the reward of social service. That is legitimate trading. If there is no relation between the payment and the service, and "chance" is the determining element, then the transaction is gambling. In the example of the two chess players who "wager" £100, Mr. Holmes confuses the issue by introducing a game in which skill is "predominant." There is skill in horse-racing. Skill is used to decide the game, but it is "blind chance" which, in the end, decides who gets the £100. From the point of view of gambling chance is the determining element in a "wager." If one party "knows" more than another of the chances the "gamble" is unfair.

Life, to Mr. Holmes, despite his assertion, is not a gamble. He is confusing

"chance" with "gambling." He even seeks to rationalise gambling. It is true that we cannot eliminate "chance" but it is also true, as I think, that the wise seek to make life "rational," to live, that is, according to principle and so far as possible to give a *stable* basis to human conduct. That is where ethics and religion come in.

F. A. de la MARE (Eastbourne).

MAJOR NOVELIST

Sir,—David Hall cannot be held responsible for the headline which attracts attention to his notice of Mr. Courage's latest novel, and the announcement of Major Novelist is perhaps an error of judgment. But Mr. Hall is responsible for declaring flatly that James Courage is our major novelist, which is a step down. Is there any point in labelling major or minor in terms of our small literature? Is there any meaning to the notion of a major New Zealand novelist, or is it simply incautious nonsense, a product of David Hall's well-known kindly enthusiasm? His enthusiasm has surely got away with his discretion when he makes his qualifications or

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states his reservations. The Courage of the first paragraph is also the Courage whose touch is less sure, whose novel needs tidying, whose characters are limited, whose landscapes are self-conscious, and so on. Mr. Hall is prompted to uneasiness; and so is his reader, who cannot help feeling that Mr. Hall is going to have Mr. Courage good (or best) at any cost. Cost, one wonders, to whom or to what?

KENDRICK SMITHYMAN
(Auckland).

TEKAPO HOUSE

Sir,—The "building" in the title photo of your recent article "Ballad Makers of the Mackenzie Country" is but a caricature of the beautiful Tekapo House. (It is really the Pukaki Hotel.)

The context of both ballad and article refers to Tekapo Hotel, long known as Tekapo House, situated at the outlet of Lake Tekapo, into which the Godley River flows, with the Godley Peaks to the north-west. The line "For whisky is forbidden here" refers to the fact that many years ago T. D. Burnett, of Mt. Cook Station, bought the original Tekapo Hotel and allowed the licence to lapse. This was done because of the carousals which took place when the shearers and station hands got their cheques and spent them at the hotel.

Tekapo House, as rebuilt in concrete in 1919, is well designed inside, and its attractive exterior appearance is enhanced by a picturesque and well-sheltered site—in every respect the antithesis of the Pukaki "building" which was done by the Works Department about ten years ago. For over half a century this has been a favourite tourist house where, for a moderate tariff, people could enjoy a pleasant, sunny holiday. It was financially successful, too, without any bar trade. But to provide more water storage for electric power the Government bought it some years ago and closed it. The Works Department has also destroyed the picturesque old bridge built in 1880. Thus at a time when great efforts are being made to develop the tourist industry,

one of the most attractive South Island resorts has been abolished.

Perhaps you would encourage Ernie Slow to write another ballad entitled, "The Rape of Tekapo House."

G.M.M. (Wellington).

THE WRONG POET

Sir,—The modern generation is often accused of insufficient education in the fields of literature. Surely they are faultless when compared with their immediate forebears. What young man or woman could possibly confuse Wordsworth with Tennyson? This mistake could be almost excusable if made privately, but when it is made in your columns, by one of your regular contributors, and manages to pass your editorial staff, unnoticed, then surely it is a crime.

Mr. Alec Guinness may well have starred in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, but I imagine that Tennyson spun in his grave when Wordsworth was attributed with,

Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.
(Tennyson—*Lady Clara Vere de Vere*)

as he was by R.W.H. in Crossword No. 819.

It would seem that the modern generation has a difficult task of correction ahead of them when they assume a more responsible position in this, their community. B. C. FRASER (Lyttelton).

(Not quite a crime, but a regrettable—and regretted—relaxation of vigilance.—Ed.)

NEW ZEALAND MUSIC SOCIETY

Sir,—I should like to reply to "The Expatriates" by B.E.G.M. in your issue of August 10 last. In this article B.E.G.M. states: "Let the New Zealand Music Society hire a public hall or a BBC studio, and give a concert of New Zealand music to astound the Pommies." He also suggests a list of works to be performed.

As Secretary of the Society, I should like to inform B.E.G.M. that we have just given our 36th public concert in the metropolis of London, at which more than 100 New Zealanders have performed. Of the works mentioned by B.E.G.M. Mr. Liburn's Chaconne for Piano, his Trio, and songs by Mr. Farquhar, have been presented.

We welcome criticism and thank him for it, but we would like him to be sure of his facts.

MARY SWAINSON (London).

JAZZ IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—"Flamingo" made a well-balanced contribution to jazz controversy when he drew attention to the fascination rather than beauty of jazz. If music be the food of love, then jazz is certainly the gay deceiver! The two do not belong to each other, however much their expression may depend on the same instruments of technique. Although one can be an intellectual of either form, there is no doubt as to which is lowbrow in origin. Your Ranfurly correspondent spoke of those who were "lucky" enough to appreciate Western modes with Negro rhythms, but in my opinion it is not so much a matter of luck as of congenital waywardness. Negro rhythms are atavistic rhythms and their adoption by "the West" is cultural degradation.

Life without jazz is not incomplete but merely selective; it is not necessary to experience convulsions in order to appreciate repose.

NORMAN WALWYN (Te Kuiti).