



## THE ADMIRABLE CRITERION

Sir,—In the second of her talks titled *The Admirable Criticism* (1YA's *Feminine Viewpoint*, July 11), Sarah Campion quoted the opening paragraphs of several novels in order to support her contention, and that of Elizabeth Bowen, as to the importance of good beginnings in novel writing.

Although as a New Zealander I find her tastes rather too English, I do not usually quarrel much with Miss Campion's broadcasts; but when, among quotations from James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster and one other whose name I forget she sandwiches an unacknowledged quotation from Frank Sargeson's *When the Wind Blows*, and dismisses it by talking of its "self-pity," and by saying that it does not entice the reader to read on, I can express only the strongest disagreement.

To begin with, to have quoted the first page of *When the Wind Blows* over the air without having made acknowledgments to the writer was discourteous—especially since the names of the other writers were given. As it is, New Zealand writers have no reason to thank the NZBS for its liberal patronage, and I hope that in addition to making a formal acknowledgment, the NZBS will also pay Mr Sargeson for the use of his work.

Unlike Miss Campion, I find that a reading of the first page of this short novel (it also formed the first part of *I Saw In My Dream*) invites and subtly entices the reader to a closer share in intimate childhood experiences.

Some small indication of the merit of *When the Wind Blows*, however admirable Miss Campion's own criterion, may be drawn from the fact that it was chosen by the distinguished editor and critic John Lehmann for publication in *Penguin New Writing* in 1946.

O. E. MIDDLETON (Waiau Pa).

(Miss Campion took pains to emphasise that she was giving a personal opinion. "You may be violently disagreeing," she said in the talk. "So much the better."—Ed.)

## GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

Sir,—As R.D.McE. implies in *Radio Review* (July 19) it is absurd to suggest that copyright law should be waived for Gilbert and Sullivan, but his reference to D'Oyly Carte "routines" calls for comment. This matter of supposed rigid control, which I remember being discussed over 50 years ago, is dealt with at length in the section entitled "The Future: What is the 'Tradition'?" in Leslie Baily's *Gilbert and Sullivan Book*, published in 1952, probably the best work of the kind. Baily says the reiterated belief that nothing whatever has been changed since the early days is fiction and myth. Derek Oldham, one of the later stars, is quoted as saying of Rupert D'Oyly Carte's chief producer, a man trained under Gilbert, that he was flexible; he would accept fresh ideas, provided they were within the tradition. Every student of the operas knows they have been redressed from time to time.

The Savoy tradition imposes a certain tone or style, and quite rightly. In

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mentioning Sheridan and Wilde, R.D.McE. supports Carte, for there, too, style has to be carefully preserved, or disaster will result. Performances of *The School for Scandal* (for me spread over some 50 years) or *The Importance of Being Earnest* do not differ in essential style from one generation to another. The Savoy operas and these comedies are perfect artificial works of art, and must be played throughout to a true pitch. "Were Oi Thoi Broide," cited by R.D.McE., is an example of being off pitch.

This reminds me of B.E.G.M.'s acidulous comment (June 28) on two episodes of the BBC Gilbert and Sullivan chronicle. Ironically, this appeared during the triumphant Wellington season of the operas. Gilbert's satire may be "miniscule" compared with that of Dickens (though why bring in Dickens?), but Gilbert continues to be a household word throughout the English-speaking world. Sullivan is said to be "very small beer beside his European contemporaries." What contemporaries? What kind of music are we considering? Like Gilbert, Sullivan goes on delighting millions, and his reputation as a composer is rising. A friend of mine is so much the "perfect Wagnerite" that he has seen *The Ring* over 20 times, but he admires Sullivan.

VICTORIAN (Wellington).

## WHO WAS HITLER?

Sir,—In view of "G's" reply to my letter, may I amplify my earlier remarks? The crucial point is not so much that the Germans committed crimes against humanity (the question of the relative guilt of the German people has been discussed in various quarters), but that humankind can be so indoctrinated and conditioned that such things become not only accepted but considered a right form of action. We should be mindful of the fact that there will always be those who are eager to exploit our vanity, sadism and greed; awareness that we can be so exploited is our principal safeguard.

It is well to remember that we are, all of us, products of our own particular culture, and that we are a mere uncertain step from formerly accepted brutalities. The British, for instance, now commonly regarded as one of the least aggressive of peoples, held public hangings barely 100 years ago, and many were the intelligent and otherwise humane individuals who regarded a hanging as a diversion not to be missed.

I do not think we should take for granted humanity's progress. There is no inevitable progression; every gleam of enlightenment has been hard won. That justice and right will always or even ultimately prevail is, to say the least, highly uncertain.

P. (Hamilton).

## A PLAY FOR SOUTHLAND

Sir,—Although so far I have been unable to read a copy of *The Montgomeries of Glenholme*, may I join the correspondence by saying that in my opinion some of the criticisms have been at fault in the premises on which they base their criticism? Two of your correspondents, I think, seemed to consider the play fell below some high standard of their own; but must a play be literature? If so, we should have to do without much excellent entertainment, including the plays of even such favourites as Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward. Again, a play is, primarily, to be played; only

a reader practised in production can readily assess what will make good theatre.

M.W. criticises the play in part on what she (I imagine this is a woman?) considers anachronisms: "La" and "pray," she says, may have been in use in Jane Austen's day, but not in the 1880s. "La" was in use in England in the '70s; why not in Otago in the '80s? "Pray" I heard used quite often by an elderly Englishwoman who died in New Zealand in the 1940's, and she did not use the word facetiously.

One of Mr Peter Harcourt's criticisms was based on Mr Montgomerie's saying, "By George!" and "Haw, haw!" Any man who has a favourite ejaculation of the sort uses it frequently, and men still laugh, "Haw, haw!" They can't help that, poor dears; it's physiological; and our "rude forefathers" were no doubt "more tediously long-winded" than Mr Harcourt had supposed; in fact, even our highly intelligent ones were that: how much of Dickens and Thackeray do most of us read and enjoy today? Even those responsible for choosing the cut-down classics in use in secondary school libraries today are agreed on the long-windedness of most of the Victorians.

Let us have criticism, but let it be on a sound basis, first asking ourselves the purpose of a particular piece of writing: a poem is to be pondered, a household hint is to instruct and a play to entertain.

M.D. (Wellington).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

## THE CHICKEN-HEARTED

Sir,—J. C. Hayes refers to the work of J. B. Rhine on parapsychology at Duke University, North Carolina. I thought at first it was to illustrate his first sentence that the mind of man is still in the early stages of evolutionary development. Instead he seems to regard it as meaning that man's mind has greater potentials than originally thought. About the only conclusion that can be drawn from J. B. Rhine's publications is that there is a sucker born every minute. Although we were invited by the conjurer when we were still children to "name a card," we were not really surprised when by some kind of magic it was produced. However, Doctor Rhine, by leaving out of his calculations many of the times when the right card is not produced, manages to be surprised that now and then the right card is produced slightly more often than might be expected.

The unscientific approach of Doctor Rhine is fully discussed in *The Spoor of Spooks and Other Nonsense*, by Bergen Evans, and by Joseph Jastrow, in "E.S.P., House of Cards," an article published in the *American Scholar*. Duke University was a small college which obligingly changed its name to Duke University at the suggestion of a wealthy oil man named Duke. When Doctor Rhine's experiments have been tried at larger universities such as Stanford, the University of Glasgow, the University of Chicago and also, I understand, at Victoria University College, no one was found who could guess the cards more accurately than chance expectancy would indicate. If there really was any scientific basis for this telepathy, other investigators in other universities using exactly the same cards would be able to achieve the same results. They cannot.

While people are only too willing to believe the psychic nonsense produced by the scientific conjurer, rather than the cold hard facts of physics, then the

frontiers of the mind are still the same old frontiers; ignorance, illiteracy, superstition and sentiment.

R.M.D. (Masterton).

## OPERA IN AUCKLAND

Sir,—Once more, two blacks do not make a white. Your correspondent Gordon Dryland has accused Sarah Campion of not getting around and knowing what has been going on in Auckland, when she inferred that opera cannot be successfully produced here. Unfortunately, the correspondent commits the same "sin" in mentioning only two local efforts, the Opera Workshop's two seasons and a concert performance of two acts of *La Bohème* by the Auckland Grand Opera Society.

Before this, however, in 1955, and again in 1956, the Milverton-Carta Opera Group staged two Grand Opera seasons. These were most successful both artistically and financially, with excellent response from public and press. The operas performed were *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *I Pagliacci*, *Savitrî* (Holst), *L'Enfant Prodigue* (Debussy), the latter two being first New Zealand performances, together with acts and scenes from *Tales of Hoffman*, *Il Trovatore*, *Lucia de Lammermoor* and *Rigoletto*. These were complete in every detail, with one exception, including full ballet (which neither the Wellington Company nor the Workshop presented) and full chorus, which again was not in the Wellington company's programmes. The exception was that the group performed to two pianos, just as the New Zealand Ballet Company has done with equal success.

Previous to this Auckland had also seen a most successful production by the Amateur Operatic Society (Auckland) of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* performed with full orchestra, chorus and ballet.

The Milverton-Carta Opera Group is also planning a further season early next year.

Do please let us give credit where credit is due.

MOLLIE G. HOLDING,  
Hon. Secretary, Milverton-Carta  
Opera Group.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

XXXX (Hamilton): It's always a nice question how much should be conceded to local interest, isn't it? Here the question had already been given one answer, in the design of the original programme.

Vulgar Boatman (Napier): (1) Such summaries (they do not include "all the details") must be taken by all stations in the link. Many listeners, more interested in sport than you are, would strongly object if their local stations were excluded, as they would be, by your proposal. (2) The schools' broadcasts have their valuable purpose and an audience by no means confined to the schools. It is not practicable to offer a wider choice of alternatives than is at present available or, in your area, in prospect. (3) You are suggesting that there is a way of supplying just the type of musical programme you like, for two hours and a half every evening, without depriving other listeners of the types of entertainment they like; there is no such way. (4) The broadcast of Parliament is a matter of Government policy.

