

BROTHERHOOD OF HAPPY HOURS

Sir,—This may seem a long time afterwards to be writing about an article which appeared in *The New Zealand Listener* of August 10, but the worldwide coverage of Old Boys' Paper collecting is responsible. Before I read the article on "The Brotherhood of the Happy Hours" I had to wait for the news of its appearance to reach me from a notice in *Collectors' Digest* (England), and then obtain a copy of *The New Zealand Listener*.

The Listener is to be congratulated by all Australian members of "The Brotherhood of the Happy Hours" for being the first periodical in New Zealand to give a comprehensive write-up to and provide such fine publicity for the hobby.

The writer of the article was apparently carried away by his own personal enthusiasm of boyhood days for Sexton Blake as at least half the space was devoted to this sleuth. Sexton Blake was a famous character, but it will be hotly debated by Billy Bunter fans whether he was "by far the most popular of all heroes of school boy papers." Bunter may hardly have been a "hero," but he is undoubtedly the most famous character of all schoolboy fiction. Perhaps considered in that way both Blake and Bunter fans will be satisfied!

I was surprised to see that no copy of either *Collectors' Miscellany* or *Story Paper Collector* was reproduced on *The Listener's* front page composite photo of the covers of Old Boys' Papers. I should think it would be very unlikely that G. W. Hockley (who supplied you with the information for the article and provided copies of the magazines for reproduction) would not have these in his collection.

Less than justice has been done to both the editors and publishers. *Collectors' Miscellany* was the first magazine of its kind, solely devoted to articles on Old Boys' Papers and has been published in England by Joseph Parks since 1928—66 issues have appeared. *Story Paper Collector* has been published in Canada by its English-born editor Wm. H. Gander since January, 1941—45 issues have appeared. Both Parks and Gander are also personally responsible for printing their own magazines.

Nelson Lee fans are also likely to be disappointed in the brief mention (by name only) of their favourite, while no reproduction appeared of it—one of the leading boys' magazines of all time.

LEON STONE (Gordon, N.S.W.).

THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Sir,—Mr. Nixon, the author of the series of talks under the above title, has met with the same fate as Galileo—suppression by the herd for daring to talk to the herd about its habits. The official statement by the Broadcasting Service says that "senior officers" terminated these talks. It is surprising to know that these gentlemen possess an outlook on society and its institutions somewhat akin to that of the savage. He likewise can give all sorts of reasons why the herd feels that it is dangerous (offensive) to step on a man's shadow.

Quotations from the official statement make it appear that Mr. Nixon's fifth talk (not broadcast) had all the ingredients of a best-seller. According to "senior officers," it was "offensive to many" in "detailed treatment" while "strongly supporting the traditional role of the family in society." This is the pattern of our most popular newspapers who feature divorce and the murky side of the family in their columns. These papers have large circulation and are supported by the "many"—the people

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

whom the Broadcasting Service seeks to protect from lecturers like Mr. Nixon!

The "senior officers" come out of this with little credit. It is time to call in the office boy.

DONALD RUTHERFORD
(Auckland).

(Mr. Rutherford's reference to "an outlook on society and its institutions somewhat akin to that of the savage" seems to have been framed and aimed in forgetfulness of a fact which has been made clear and which is recalled in one of the phrases he quotes. There was no objection whatever, at any time, to the line of argument adopted. The objection was to the mode of expression, in some of the passages, and to that only. In the view of the Broadcasting Service, the expression could have been revised without injury to the argument and its effectiveness; Mr. Nixon declined to revise it. It was his right to decline. It is also the right—and the duty—of the Broadcasting Service to reject a script likely to give unnecessary and avoidable offence through its phrasing, to many listeners in a radio audience which cannot, of course, be pre-selected.—Ed.)

USE FOR DOCKS

Sir,—What use are docks in the world? ("Sundowner," November 30). Well, they're an excellent cure for boils. You dig up a few youngish roots, scrape them clean, cut them up small, put them in a pot with cold water, boil for 10 minutes, let cool gradually, and occasionally drink some of the liquid. After a two-year run of boils, with medical skill unavailing, I found dock-root miraculous. A good general tonic, too. Please tell "Sundowner."

—P. G. (Havelock North).

"SUNDOWNER" AND ISRAEL

Sir,—My little bit of fun with "Sundowner" threatens to lead us into unprofitable depths. I accept Berdyaev's view that the God worshipped by orthodox religionists is a purely human invention. D. F. B. Eyres considers that in the Old Testament a supreme being called God "reveals" himself. If that is true I must point out that the self revealed is jealous, fickle, vengeful, cruel and a sender of evil spirits that lead men to do evil. When Solomon celebrated the conclusion of the building of the temple he slaughtered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep as offerings to this tribal deity. The number of unedifying episodes in the Old Testament is no recommendation of the deity "revealed." Mr. Eyres does not accept the view that there was any conflict in Israel between the shepherding and the agricultural ways of life. I side with more competent students than I who think there was—but the point is not worth labouring. I have no doubt whatever that the Old Testament is a salad of oral traditions, folk lore inventions and some historical data that makes really fascinating reading. And I have no doubt whatever that it has the same validity as a spiritual guide as the Koran or the Book of Mormon or the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius; that is to say, you can get out of it what you take to it.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

THE NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Sir,—I have listened to most of the National Orchestra's concerts in the past year and I wish to congratulate the members on the high standard they have attained. In my opinion the orchestra is as good as other older orchestras overseas in the manner that it presents its programmes. Credit is also due to the programme planners; they have done a wonderful job, and I trust that the same high standard will be maintained this

year. In my opinion these were the highlights of last season: (1) The performance of Alfred Hill's Piano Concerto with Marjorie Hesse as soloist; (2) The presentation of *Messiah* by the six choral groups during the Centennial Music Festival in March; (3) The Performances of Douglas Lilburn's Symphony; (4) The performance of the Sibelius Second Symphony during the Auckland Music Festival; (5) The concert Menuhin gave with the orchestra; (6) The performance of *La Mer* by Debussy, in Wellington.

May I suggest that in 1952: (1) The orchestra gives more concerts in the smaller towns, especially on the West Coast and in Northland. (2) When the orchestra gives studio concerts a small audience be admitted to the concert. This would give life to the performance and would assure the musicians that their music was being appreciated. (3) Broadcasting stations cross over to the halls five minutes before the performance starts. This applies to all relays. Recently 2YC crossed over so late that the announcer in the hall hadn't time to give the names of the soloists. (4) A two-night season be given in the smaller towns with classical and lighter programmes alternating. (5) The Broadcasting Service does not lose money by sending the orchestra to Auckland, but spends this money by subsidising the Auckland Junior Symphony Orchestra, as this orchestra appeals to the Auckland public more than does the National Symphony. In conclusion, I can only state that it will be a grand day when the orchestra's broadcasts can be relayed by more than one station.

ALLEGRO CON BRIO
Pukekohe.

(Our correspondent's suggestions are commented on as follows: "1 and 4: The Broadcasting Service has done, and continues to do, as much as possible to include smaller towns in the National Orchestra's itinerary, and to adapt programmes to the response of new audiences; but touring plans have to be regulated by costs. 2. The small hall from from which the National Orchestra broadcasts studio programmes does not conveniently admit even small audiences; but it is hoped some day to fulfil the suggestion. 3. Noted. 5. The Broadcasting Service does not estimate the interest of the Auckland public by the attendances at one concert series, late in the season. The prospect of network relays is looked for as eagerly as by the correspondent."—Ed.)

THE THAMES TUNNEL

Sir,—The first tunnel under the Thames was constructed about 1851 for foot passengers only. One entrance was near the Tower of London, and the other was in Bermondsey on the other side of the river. The other tunnel was, I believe, constructed for the L.B. and S.C. Railway. It extended from Rotherhithe to Wapping. During my younger days I used to travel through the tunnels quite a lot. A. WHYMARK (Lower Hutt).

"TO A JET PILOT"

Sir,—It seems that David R. Watson has summed up these obscurantist poets quite adequately. I am of normal intelligence (I hope) and have written poems, and had them published, too, but for the life of me I see no gem-like transparency—or that beauty of broad flowing sounds we expect to see in poetry—in many of these obscurantist poets. Nor, should I say, do the vast majority of your readers.

If this should be the real thing, appreciated only by a small coterie of intellectuals (mostly James Agate's corduroy-trouser brigade, no doubt) then their publications should be kept to journals which cater for this group. No

amount of general publication will make readers appreciate poems with such phrases as "shop girls' breasts" or "mene, mene, tekell."

This may sound a smug letter from the pen of an envious Philistine. But I know the modern poets, and when we read such lines as

... To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.
And the mystery
Sang alive
Still in the water and singing birds ...

who wants to read of the sky as an "amorous vault" or the physical attractions of shop girls! This stuff isn't even "pseudo-intellectual," as David Watson suggests, but vulgar and distasteful.

FLUSH (Auckland).

PIPE BAND MUSIC

Sir,—From time to time, pleas have been made through the columns of *The Listener* that more regular recognition be given to lovers of bagpipe music—all, apparently, without avail.

Would it be pertinent to ask what has become of the Home pipe band and solo recordings which listeners used to enjoy in the *Pipes of Scotland* series formerly heard over all stations? Would it also be pertinent to ask if the programme department obtains the latest recordings of the Home pipe bands and leading solo pipers? Finally, Sir, would it be pertinent to ask that listeners be provided with weekly broadcasts of pipe music of the above type from each of the YA stations?

A very small percentage of New Zealand pipe bands, which are heard at irregular intervals from various stations, provide a standard of music comparable with those overseas recordings which I have already mentioned.

E. S. CAMERON (Taumarunui).

(1. *Pipes of Scotland* was a BBC programme series, playing rights in which have long expired. 2. All available recordings from known sources of supply are bought and circulated. 3. Each YA station broadcasts a programme once a month.—Ed.)

OLD JACK

Sir,—Like "Nauticus," I was interested in your article "Coasting Around New Zealand," in which the ship Old Jack was mentioned. This name stirs up an old memory of school days, some 65 years ago, when a small ketch-rigged vessel named Old Jack arrived in Wellington from Port Underwood with a cargo of Sweet Russet apples in bulk. She was moored alongside the breastwork opposite W. and G. Turnbull's warehouse. The apples were sold loose in any quantity, direct to the public from the little ship's hold. Naturally a boy fond of apples would remember the incident.

I wonder if this is the same Old Jack mentioned in your article?

OLD WELLINGTONIAN
(Now Raglan.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Oamaru.—Will pass on your tribute.
G.E.E. (Wanganui).—Many thanks.
R. G. Tofts (New Plymouth).—Yes; during the summer months.
S.N.L. (Napier).—No photograph available at present. We hope to obtain one a little later.

A.H.R. (Dunedin).—Fred and Maggie Everybody are played by Edward Howell and Theresa Desmond (Mrs. Edward Howell).

Jackson (Wellington).—Weather forecast times are being reviewed with the Meteorological Office. At present no report is available for broadcasting till after the 7.0 a.m. London news, but the need for an earlier forecast will be considered.