

VERSES IN TRAMCARS

Sir,—I was delighted to read your pleasant article on this subject, as in almost 20 years I have met no one else who ever noticed the verses. In the late thirties I was living and working in Wellington, and I too memorised, like the young man you mention, the poem "Wellington." I have often quoted parts of it in defence of that libelled city. On days of humid heat in Auckland, those words

no languid beauty she
spreading her soft limbs amid dreaming
flowers.
But rough and strenuous, red with rudest
health.
Tossing her blown hair from her eager
eyes
are most apt and telling.

I remember the poem by Hubert Church, "Victoria College," and I am almost certain you are correct in thinking that Bracken's "Not Understood" was in one tram, because I was particularly unhappy during some of those years, and you know how the young when miserable wallow in that poem!

Imagine all this pent up in one human being for 20 years, and at last released by an article in your paper (in which, may I here assure you, I find much excellent reading). It makes one wish there were some magic sign by which people who notice and appreciate odd things could recognise one another on sight—they seem so rare in one's life. The whole delicate fabric of the allusion is ruined by lengthy explanation to those who do not understand.

Would some reader, or would you in an editorial note, please tell me who wrote of someone dying "with all his music still within him?"

E.S. (Auckland).

(A poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Voiceless," has these lines:
Alas for those that never sing,
But die with all their music in them!—Ed.)

EAST AND WEST

Sir,—Mr. Peter Mann directs our thoughts to Communism as merely a set of ideas in contra-distinction to an interim dictatorship in practice. We should put right out of our minds (he implies) the cringing and mendacious teaching of history in the U.S.S.R., the debasement of all public expression of thought to the end that the unfortunate Russian people will worship the god of dialectical materialism, the mass murders in the Ukraine before, during and after World War II, the murder of the Poles at Katyn, the Siberian slave communities, the destruction of the kulaks, the impudent and unprecedented abuses of diplomatic hospitality in Canada, Britain, U.S.A., and elsewhere, the slanders and murders of priests and nuns in China, Korea and the satellite countries, the present disgusting persecution of the Jews, in short, the whole catalogue of crime that cries to Heaven for vengeance.

On the contrary, I think we should bear these things in mind and pray for the unfortunate Russian people who do not deserve and never have deserved such "interim" rulers, and concerning those "interim" rulers we should say "Vouchsafe O Lord to repress their presumption by the power of Thy right hand."

BY THEIR FRUITS... (Wellington).

Sir,—Your correspondent "A.W." is correct in surmising that I did not know such facts as the statistics of land acreage, etc., held by the peasants under the Tsars. There are other facts, however, which speak for themselves, such as:

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(1) The huge percentage of illiteracy—over 90 per cent. under the Tsarist regime, contrasting astonishingly with the present set-up, when education is compulsory between the ages of seven and 14, with ample opportunities for voluntary education before and after those ages. (2) The extraordinary difference in the morale of the Russian troops in the first and second World Wars. In 1917 the so-called "Russian steam-roller" cracked up, simply because the individual soldier had nothing to defend. Compare with this the magnificent stand made at Stalingrad during the recent war, which was just one of thousands of such incidents, proving that the people considered their country worth fighting to preserve. I hold no brief for Russian Communism and should dislike equally to have to live either in Russia or America, because in neither country could I enjoy the privilege of freedom of speech or thought. But this form of police state is based on fear, and our fears are unfortunately fostered by the attitude of the press, which almost invariably headlines anything derogatory to Russia and her allies. It could be alleviated considerably if we were given a more balanced account of life in the "Eastern bloc" countries. We of the West might feel very humble were we allowed to know how much the Soviet is spending on its education services, and its marvellous books and films produced solely for children, the latter reputedly being unsurpassed by any other country. And as the same attitude apparently prevails in Russia, it follows that their fears are engendered by lack of understanding of our actions, aims and intentions, and ignorance of our way of life.

All this, to me, adds up to proof of the folly and futility of the blind self-righteousness so apparent in our dealings with each other since 1945.

C.R.S. (Roxburgh).

GERMAN SINGERS

Sir,—How delightful are German songs, especially from 1YA from 9.0 a.m. on Sunday mornings! I am satisfied that the German is the perfect musical technician. Breath control, piano passages and attack are ahead of the singers of any other nation. The French have artistry, yes, but for all-round musical perfection the German is in a class on his own. By the way, I should like to plead for more operatic duets.

R.E.B. (Remuera).

THE CULTIVATED MAN

Sir,—May I uphold the Quixotic tradition of these columns by leaping to the defence of one of your contributors? It should be immaterial that I defend him against himself.

I find a similarity between "Sundowner's" ideal of the cultivated man (*Listener*, March 6) and the case he mentioned recently of a woman so much in love with the artist as to ignore the work of art. His cultivated man is so much in love with culture as to disregard that which is both its source, and the spring whence it is perpetually renewed: the common man. That culture which separates a man from those who have been endowed with such vitality as to be independent of synthetic embellishments of life, is false. I cannot be dissuaded from the belief (faith, if you like) that the result of true culture is the destruc-

tion of that contempt of the uncultivated that mere education often engenders.

One who comes in contact with "ignorance, superstition, cruelty, coarseness, stupidity and fanaticism," yet is still capable of such a self-criticism, falls well within the limits of any definition of culture. Neither the fact of his essential simplicity, nor the acts that prompt him to think thus, can be held to exclude him from that category.

FORTY YEARS YOUNGER
(Auckland).

HAKLUYT

Sir,—The current series of broadcasts on Hakluyt's voyages could have given opportunity for the clarification of the pronunciation of this uncertain word. Too commonly it is given a foreign or at least un-English flavour by the Harkloot or Hack-lowit version, but as it has been a good English name since 1260, if not earlier, there is little justification for any unusual effort of the tongue.

In the Hakluyt Society's centenary volume (1946) occasion was made for animadversion on the pronunciation, and Dr. J. A. Williamson says that, as the Elizabethan pronunciation can be construed from the commonest spelling—Haklitt or Haklett—he prefers to adopt the same, and accordingly favours Hacklit. This is the form that I habitually use in all business, pleasure, etc., connected with the modern society of the Elizabethan scholar.

C. R. H. TAYLOR,
Hon. Secretary in New Zealand,
The Hakluyt Society.

RETURN OF THE SCAPEGOAT

Sir,—As a human being who managed to escape from his enslaved country before being humiliated to a robot or to "something less than a human" may I be permitted to say a few words to the admirers of the biggest slave labour camp ever created on earth? "The liberated people" are really a witness to a new conception in living, something your correspondents have not the slightest knowledge of. The Soviet Constitution has a lot of fine language; freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of meetings, are guaranteed by law to the citizens of the USSR if in the interest of the workers and for the purpose of strengthening the socialist order. The Government does not have to obey the law, since "the dictatorship of the proletariat is the rule unrestricted by law and based on force." (Stalin, *Principles of Leninism*, page 32.) The only principle on which this regime is based is the rule of force and violence.

There was an abundance of writers in the 19th Century in Russia who were almost political prophets. In 1870 Dostoevsky wrote: "A day will come in Russia when Copernicus will have his eyes put out and the Shakespeares of our times will be killed and Russia will spread her lies and her revolution throughout the world, and every scurvy group in the world will be made use of... and the teachers in other lands who say there is no God will be on our side though they know it not... and the political men who are willing to sacrifice truth will be on our side..."

It has to be deplored that even here in New Zealand Dostoevsky's prophecy is being fulfilled by the different groups of your correspondents. One of them spreads Russian lies, the other says "there is no God." And some of your thoughtful contributors are refreshed

and encouraged by J. W. Warburton's naive outlook on world affairs: "Russia has been without political liberty for hundreds of years... You do not miss what you've never had." It is a very poor philosophy in the middle of the 20th Century. Why then did the French people revolt in 1879 and demand political freedom? Why did they miss what they never had before? Mr. Warburton should acquaint himself with the causes of the bourgeois-democratic Revolution of 1825, and realise that today there are living in the heart of Russia millions of people of different nations who, prior to Russian annexation, had enjoyed universal freedom. And therefore even those who are willing to sacrifice the truth and millions of wretched slaves—who do not miss political liberty—are on the Kremlin's side "though they know it not."

PADEREWSKI (Hamilton).
(Abridged—Ed.)

"THEM WAS THE DAYS"

Sir,—As one who was young in this country 50 years ago, I strongly disapprove of the Monday evening programme, *Them Was the Days*, from 1YA. Most of us were taught and spoke correct English, tinged perhaps in the older members of a family with the accent and the quaint sayings of the Old Country from which we or our parents originated. I never remember hearing such illiteracy as comes over in *Them Was the Days*.

Could we not have a series of programmes, *Those Were the Days*, which would give a true picture of our songs, our musical evenings, our games, our pastimes, the joys of anticipation and realisation when musical or dramatic companies visited our towns? These would give reminiscent pleasure to us old folks and could at least do no harm to any members of the younger generation who listened to them.

ONE OF THE SEVENTIES
(Auckland).

DANCE BANDS

Sir,—During the past few months I have heard four "different" bands over the radio—those of Bob Leach, Derek Heine, Julian Lee and Crombie Murdoch. These bands play the same style of arrangements and appear to be almost one and the same band, one member having had his name announced in connection with each of these bands. This suggests two things to me: First, that there is a circle of musicians who have got the pickings shared out between them and are reluctant to let anyone else in; secondly, that there are not sufficient musicians available to make up bands of different personnel.

If it is the former, then what a state of selfishness and bad feeling must exist! If the latter, surely it would be far better to have just a couple of bands of entirely different players. This should create competition, thereby keeping the standard of playing high. When a number of bands play the same style of "home-made" arrangements the effect becomes stodgy and boring to listen to.

PUZZLED (Auckland).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

C.L.C. (Auckland).—No information available.

E.S. (Auckland).—Sorry: correspondence closed.

Storekeeper (Hoe-o-tainui).—Afraid it arrived too late.

Flinty (Palmerston North).—Brodzsky's "Be My Love."

Peter Mann (Auckland).—Can't see your point.