

Sir,—In the letter from "Mac" there is an implication that you, Sir, in admitting poetry to *The Listener*, have a clear choice between the old, represented by "Kipling and others of his school," and the new, described as "a jumble of words." May I suggest that your choice is not quite so simple as that? Whenever you are offered poetry that is "simple, sensuous and passionate," in Milton's phrase, I am sure you, Sir, accept it, but though this kind of poetry is still written here and there, the general trend of fashion is against it. What may be called the new poetry has certain virtues. It breaks new ground, uses new idioms and metres, and employs and makes demands on the imagination in new ways. If poetry does not advance, it retreats; Pegasus cannot go on indefinitely planting its feet in the same footprints.

On the other hand, poetry now tends to cast off certain old elements of popular appeal. It is intensely cerebral. Roughly speaking, it is written not for the public, but for poets. Now that Masefield has virtually ceased writing, I cannot think of a single poet in Britain who is popular in the old sense of the term. Nor can I think of one popular poem written, say, in the last 20 years. It has been predicted that people will be singing Kipling's "Mandalay" 300 years hence, just as they now sing Ben Jonson's "Drink to Me Only." I cannot recall one lyric of merit written of recent years that has become a popular song. If anyone cares to correct me on these points I shall welcome it. It is also significant that present-day poets are seldom if ever quoted. A few lines from T. S. Eliot are current, but I think they are all from one poem. The poet of our time most frequently quoted is still Kipling, who came to his zenith about half a century ago. The reason, I take it, is that the "new" poets lack the facility of putting reasonably simple sentiments into easily understood verse.

I have recently read two poems in a leading English literary weekly. One was completely incomprehensible, and that some fitful gleams stole through the fog of the other was perhaps due to the fact that the subject was the moon. Your other correspondent "Arejay" told a story of a man who won a poetry competition by concocting a piece of nonsense. This may or may not be true, but it is a fact that in recent years there have been authentic cases of "spoofing," in Britain and overseas. In at least one case the perpetrator received requests to include his verses in anthologies.

VICTORIAN (Wellington).

WRITERS AND READERS

Sir,—During a discussion by poets on the reading of their own verse, T. S. Eliot is said to have remarked that a poet does at least speak the lines as he himself heard them in the process of writing. The value of that truth as applied to broadcasting seems to be slowly gaining recognition, not only in the reading of poetry, but of short stories and other scripted matter.

Listening to 3YC's broadcast of "Barry Simpson's Story," by Dennis McDowd (whose recent "A World Regained") had whetted my appetite for more) I was struck by the remarkable way in which the author identified himself with his character without apparent effort or any of the tricks of acting. The story itself, scarcely more than an anecdote, was simple, humorous, and intensely moving; the reading of it as near perfection as one could imagine. My point is, however, not that we were

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for once given an item of such rare quality, but that the same method (the author-reader idea) could well be tried more often. The Broadcasting Service appears to have at call a number of extremely able readers, and there is always the temptation to fall back on them. But listeners have acute ears for distinguishing between an assumed interest, however well simulated, and the real thing.

Nevertheless, we should be grateful to 3YC for *Slightly Out of True*. Maybe other centres will be moved to experiment along similar lines.

E.B. (Auckland).

"LITTLE MURDERESSES"

Sir,—I heartily agree with J. Ryan in the criticism of *Little Murderesses*. That we should be expected to want to listen to a horror story distilled from one of the books free from any such taint, is a sad commentary, not on our intelligence so much as on our spiritual decadence. Surely, if men want to be clever, there are other avenues along which they can develop their brains. The responsibility for stemming the tide of violence, rapine and murder is the responsibility, not only of the Government, but of every citizen.

S. HAYMAN (Willowbridge)

Sir,—It is over 40 years since I read *Little Women*; but, if my memory serves me, Mr. Wall overlooked one significant piece of circumstantial evidence. Was it not the *butcher's* bill that Jo paid with the proceeds of one of her first stories?

MURIEL MAY (Invercargill).

WILD SURMISE

Sir,—The paragraph on "Stout Cortez" in *The Listener* of July 24 reminded me of a parody, attributed, I believe, to Lord Dunsany:

Surely there was no R.S.P.C.A.
In the Pacific, on that far-off day,
When Cortez, far the stoutest of his men,
Stood silent on a "peke" in Darien.

BARBARA COOPER (Te Marua).

CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS

Sir,—We inherit from the Victorian period—in attenuated form—class-consciousness that marks people off according to their money, possessions and leisure. The casual labourer, e.g., the dock worker, was lower than the man with steady daily work or the weekly wage-earner, who was lower than the salaried man, who was lower than the professional man, who was lower than the landed gentleman or aristocrat. There was the broad general distinction between the manual worker and the brain worker.

Our competitive society pivots on the struggle between individuals for pre-eminence linked to position, wealth and authority. Until we know them intimately, we are prone to classify persons by externals—to judge the sausage by its skin, as it were. Veblen in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* gives us the clue to some of our social distinctions: "Gentle blood is blood which has been ennobled by protracted contact with accumulated wealth or unbroken prerogative."

Lord Elton, writing on social sectarianism in 1949, said: "For a good many generations yet the existing aristocracy, or aristocracies—for there are several—may well survive... The peer may sup in the kitchen on bread and cheese,

and his wife wash up after the meal; but they are unlikely to sit down with the agricultural labourer to eat it."

There is less demarcation in education and approximately universality of opportunity in New Zealand as compared with the older countries, and this tends to wash out class-consciousness. Yet I think we could find class-consciousness operating at the crucial point of marriage. Shaw held that "Equality in practice means intermarriageability." I think that a very good standard of measurement.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

Sir,—Mr. Congalton's survey has in his list of occupations that of nonconformist minister. Is this not a reprehensible terminological inexactitude as applied to any branch of the Church in New Zealand? In Great Britain, where there are two established churches, the term nonconformist may have meaning, differing completely in connotation north and south of the Tweed. Where, as in our own land, there is no established church, how can the term nonconformist be used?

NON-CONFORMIST (Dunedin).

PASTEURISATION

Sir,—I am astounded to read that the main reason for pasteurisation has been ignored by your correspondents. As a young mother (and former nurse) I would never give my children unpasteurised milk unless I knew its origin and could ascertain that the cows supplying it were T.B. tested and healthy. There is also the risk of passing on undulant fever (an extremely dangerous disease) to say nothing of others such as typhoid and dysentery which have been traced to dirty milk supplies and unhealthy cattle. Perhaps the taste is spoilt by pasteurisation for some, but what a risk to take!

To E. Cain I would say that I am not a Plunket authority but would suggest that the reason for stressing that milk (which has already been pasteurised) should be boiled for infants is because it is more digestible in that state.

When my eldest child went on to full milk at 10 months I particularly asked whether it should be boiled still and was told by the nurse that it was no longer necessary.

M.M. (Gisborne).

ORCHESTRAL BROADCASTS

Sir,—On Saturday evening, August 8, many Auckland listeners were the victims of what seemed to me a very happy accident—which I hope will occur again. The Saturday orchestral concert had been put forward to Friday to allow the Town Hall to be used for another purpose, but the Broadcasting Service adhered to the programme originally advertised for Saturday by recording Friday's performance and broadcasting it on the following evening. This meant that having attended the concert (as regular subscribers, may I add), we had the added pleasure of hearing at least half of it for a second time. In this particular case, with Hephzibah Menuhin giving such a vital performance of the Brahms Concerto, it was an experience both rich and rare.

I should like to ask the Broadcasting Service whether it would consider recording all performances of the National Orchestra and giving them as delayed broadcasts. For those of us who take our music seriously, and for those who

are regular subscribers, this is a most valuable experience, especially in the case of first performances of modern works. For example, I was not convinced personally by the Shostakovich Symphony, but I would welcome the opportunity of changing my mind if I could hear it again the following night.

This is a plea, I repeat, for people who are genuinely interested in the National Orchestra and its achievements and who show their interest in a practical way by attending concerts. May I also point out that my suggestion in no way prejudices the listener who stays at home. He will get his performance in any case. In fact he might even be tempted into the experiment of attending a concert and hearing it again on the following evening.

A. C. KEYS (Auckland).

COLOUR AND PATTERN

Sir,—Professor L. R. Richardson seems to take a great delight in challenging evolution concepts which are so obviously grounded on facts that they hardly require defending. Possibly, however, he provides a goodly store of ammunition for the anti-evolutionists, very few of whom are field naturalists, and who, for the most part, live in a world of printed words. The professor's latest windmill is the concept of colour and pattern adaptation in animal life which, of course, implies usefulness; and this he denies. One cannot deal here with all the points he raises, but there is one I feel will not be very convincing even to the anti-evolutionist, namely, that the idea of warning colouration is untenable when many startlingly marked snakes are nocturnal. The inference is that nocturnal snakes are only seen in the dark, so that their startling markings are useless as a warning device. But even nocturnal snakes are seen in the daytime. Personally, if I wanted a peaceful, undisturbed daylight nap in the jungle, I'd prefer a blanket having a colour pattern matching that of the wickedest nocturnal snake in the district.

W. B. BROCKIE (Wellington).

SEQUOIA AND KAURI

Sir,—"Sundowner," referring to the Californian Sequoias, writes, "If we have something bigger than these monsters, something to throw at the next American who thrusts a redwood in our face, I am all for letting the fact be known." Well, here's 'arf a brick to throw at the next American asking for it. While the largest Kauri cannot compete with the largest Sequoia in height or in girth at the foot, the largest officially measured Kauri easily beat the largest Sequoia in its content of timber. In other words the largest Kauri was a tree of far greater use to mankind than the largest Sequoia—this of course because the Kauri rises like a pillar, whereas the Sequoia tapers. In my forthcoming *The Story of the Kauri* I am giving full particulars of our largest Kauris, and quoting authorities.

A. H. REED (Dunedin).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

N. Philpott (Blenheim).—Thanks for information.

Arco (Rotorua).—Concerto Grosso in D Minor by Vivaldi.

J.R.R. (Wynham).—Ten weeks, if you are listening to 4ZB.

Fiat Lux (Napier).—Interesting, but a little outside the subject under discussion.

E.M. (Mosgiel).—As far as is known, the programme will not be sent to New Zealand.

R. Black and A Spoke in the Wheel (Timaru).—The subject is better left to the principals, who have already spoken for themselves.