

THIS WEEK'S SIGNED ARTICLE.

Like Local Dialects, Deride American Speech ... By Keith Gunn

MUCH unconsidered nonsense is perenially spoken and written in criticism of American English. Most of it is obviously uttered by people who have not thought beyond a few recordings or talking films. Their most usual complaint is that American nasality grates on the ears and that its idiom is unfitted for the impressionable New Zealand youngster. It is apparently a case of the exception being mistaken for the rule.

Some years ago for a period of four days I had practically no other company than that of more than two hundred Americans, and only one voice of all those I listened to was unpleasant. That's an average which could scarcely be bettered by a similar group of New Zealanders. Apart from meeting them en masse, I have encountered citizens of the United States regularly for years; yet of these, the people whose voices and quality of expression were below the standard of similarly educated New Zealanders were rare. Indeed, there were some who, though lacking in educational "finish" were easy to listen to by virtue of their softness of voice, colour of inflexion, and originality of expression, features usually lacking in New Zealanders of equal education.

If critics of American English were more discerning there would be less of their criticism. Nine times out of ten they talk or write about "those frightful American records" or "that awful American voice of Cal Callin in that film last night." But what about those others in the cast of the film, and the scores of Americans heard on recordings whose "Americanisation" of the English language amounts to nothing worse than a roll which gives their vowels a different value from those of a B.B.C. announcer? (And the ordinary colonial, with his "eow's" and "oi's" in such words as cows and pies would be just as much at fault if there were such a thing as standard English.

AOTSAOTS

"GIRLS who disappear.—On sale here," said an Auckland women's paper bulletin last week.

TICKETS for the Ramfury Shield match in Dunedin last week were being sold privately at up to £3 each.

A NEW game has been invented by two Auckland travellers. Using numbers of alternate cars they pass they bet, as with poker hands.

"IS it still the Broadcasting Board? No, I seem to be wrong—I mean the National Broadcasting Service."—Mr. John Amadio at a Christchurch function.

J. PARTINGTON, owner of the old Grafton windmill, Auckland's last link with the 'forties, the site of which is required for a new fire station, says he would refuse a million pounds for the mill.

Handlebar Moustache

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE... is how an American writer describes an adornment which an Englishman might have called "a moustache whose appearance reminds one of the horns of a Highland cow." Need any more be said for the picturesqueness of the United States English? The article on this page does not defend objectionable Americanisms, but on the other hand, it offers no compromise.

should it be condemned when we tolerate the colloquialisms of our own dialects? If English purism is the aim of critics of American speech, why do not the same people object to post-war immigration which brought dialects from every part of Great Britain to "corrupt" the language of the growing New Zealander?

As long as its use is confined to suitable subject matter, I am all for a brighter English—more colourful with apt

simile, more human than academic, more striking than slangy. Indeed, it is surprising to find such good speech coming from a continent which after all contains millions of inhabitants whose progenitors were anything but English.

A charge recently laid by an English writer that American commentaries were among other things, "crude" and a "continuous string of excited comment" drew this reply from another Englishman: "Continuous! You write as though continuity were not one of the fundamental necessities of a commentary. And 'excited'! Well, it's a poor game if it doesn't

rouse you to excitement. And they are 'facetious'! Utterly deplorable that a spark of wit should brighten and make more palatable the long string of facts. It would not become our 'British attitude toward sport.' And then the 'slangy vein' and the wisecracks. These condense long sentences into epigrammatic, stimulating and picturesque phrases."

That about sums up the subject of comparative commentaries, and the appreciation of the Americans in this is reflected in the fan-mail which poured into 2YA, Wellington, after a visiting American wrestler described three rounds of a match some .im ago.

And why should not Americans produce Shakespeare? Have they not as much right to appreciate the bard as the

English? Their interest in Shakespeare seems to be deeper than New Zealand's, to judge by the reception of a recent film; a film made essentially for Americans, perhaps, and the rest of the world could could take it or leave it. Maybe it sounds funny—to some objectionable—to hear an American accer interpreting Shakespeare. But what of French and German and Italian translations of it? Are they, too, funny or objectionable? No more so than English translations of Continental opera!

Let us exclude the gangster, the Bowery, and the negroid vocabularies from everyday English, by all means. But there is a wealth of desirable phraseology in America with which the "original" English would be greatly enriched.

AOTSAOTS

THE attraction of making one's own receiving set is returning in Dunedin, where kit sets are selling freely.

SIR STANDISH O'GRADY ROCHE, a member of the Governor-General's staff, left New Zealand by the Monterey last week.

THE increasing numbers of intoxicated motor drivers are causing Magistrate W. R. McKean to threaten offenders with prison.

"MANY offend but few are chosen. Out of a thousand motorists who commit parking breaches in Christchurch, 10 or 15 are arrested" Solicitor in the Court.

GUESTS at Warner's Hotel, Christchurch, shot out of their bedrooms the other night to investigate an explosion. A car's spare tire had given the Square the air!

Next week's article, on American newspapers and radio, has been written by Mr. Mason Warner, of the "Chicago Tribune."