

MARCH 24, 1944

War As It Is

WHAT is it like to wait for zero hour? What is it like to go into battle with the guns roaring behind and in front of you, with land mines sowed around you, and the enemy waiting ahead? Nobody who has not himself taken part in front-line fighting can answer those questions, and few who have can put their impressions into clear enough language to make the experience real to those who have never fought. But what the tongue and the pen often cannot do, the movie camera sometimes can. It can do it because it is impersonal and has no inhibitions and can take in more than any human eye. And in the film *Desert Victory*, which officially records the Battle of El Alamein and the rout of the Afrika Korps, it has done it. After a long delay, this film has now been released to New Zealand audiences. It will give them the closest thing possible to a first-hand experience of modern warfare. And although the illusion that war is a romantic business is already as good as dead, this film should help to put the last nail in its coffin. For while there is much that is exciting and heroic and sensational about *Desert Victory*, there is nothing glamorous about it, and nobody is glamorised—not even the New Zealanders, in spite of the fact that the film was sent back in order that more prominence should be given them. The faces it puts unforgettably on the screen—the faces of English, Scottish, Australian, New Zealand, and South African soldiers; yes, and of Germans and Italians too—are not the faces of conventional story-book warriors. They are the faces of men who are grim but bewildered; determined but fearful; childlike rather than fierce. For this is a documentary film in the truest sense; a unique record of war and of what the fighting man endures in it. Seeing it, one may well believe that four of the 26 cameramen who made it were killed, seven were wounded, and six were captured.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MINERALS IN OUR SOIL

Sir,—Perhaps Dr. Muriel Bell has heard of Dr. Harootian, of Massachusetts. But anyway the following extract from *Time* (September 13, 1943) may be of interest to readers. Prompted by the findings of a Texas dentist a few years ago. Dr. Harootian tried an experiment on nine patients. *Time* says: "Dr. Harootian gave capsules of bone flour (rich in calcium, phosphorous and fluorine) to nine women whose teeth were decaying very rapidly. Decay seemed to stop almost at once. During the nine-month trial no tooth decay spread, only one new

own culture and religion and even, in many cases, to retain its own form of government.

The Romans were, however, too sane to believe that government was possible unless it was invested with power to enforce its requirements. As for education, the schools of Athens were crowded with Roman youth, educational endowments were common and J. C. Stobart (who is an authority on the subject) states that in the late Empire, education was more universal and easier to attain than at any subsequent time until the middle of the 19th century.

The Roman civilisation was swamped by surrounding barbarisms and Europe has had to rebuild on the fragments that that survived. Of course it was not a Utopia, but it was Utopian compared with many centuries that succeeded it and in some respects with the present age.

JAS. FITZGERALD (Christchurch).

THE HOUSE AT WORK

Free Supplement With Next Issue

PHOTOGRAPHS of members of the present Parliament, with a plan of the House of Representatives showing where each member sits, will be issued free as a supplement with next week's New Zealand "Listener."

cavity developed. One hole drilled for a filling but left empty did not decay at all. Says Dr. Harootian: "The results are so striking as almost to eliminate coincidence as an explanation!"

'Could Dr. Bell tell us if there has been any research carried out recently on the mineral content of N.Z. soil? If so, has it revealed a lack of calcium, phosphorous, and fluorine?

D.H.H. (Invercargill).

"SERVICEMEN AT PLAY"

Sir,—I have just opened this week's *Listener* and I have been chuckling over the cartoon "Servicemen at Play." May I mention one very important point which your artist has overlooked? The usual crowd of servicemen who never come to dance are conspicuous by their absence. They fill half the hall, smoking and swapping yarns to the inconvenience of the dancers. But perhaps they have all gone to supper, in which case I beg forgiveness. Despite the criticism, this is labelled as one of my "pin-ups." Thanks.

"WALLFLOWER" (Christchurch).

GEOGRAPHY FOR THE CITIZEN

Sir,—The Ancients were a credulous lot, they believed everything that Dr. Herodotus told them and Dr. Herodotus believed everything he was told or that he had seen in a book somewhere. We are much more enlightened to-day, we know where Novorossisk is, and much good may it do us.

The Romans conceived of the world as consisting of men, of communities, and of nations. It was in this world that Marcus Aurelius counselled an understanding of our place and relationship. The Romans understood far better than we do the essentials of government, of law, and even of world order, and they achieved the last named to a remarkable extent: the Pax Romana endured for 150 years. As long as a nation under Roman rule kept the peace it was free to follow its own customs, to develop its

THUMB-SUCKING

Sir,—The article on Thumb-sucking in a recent *Listener* would be amusing if it were not written by the Director of School Hygiene. He begins by saying that thumb-sucking is caused by inadequate diet or treatment and then after discussing the bad effect this habit has on teeth says it is not easy to stop the habit once it is a fixture. Dr. Turbott has two remedies. The first one is to bind the child's thumb with layers of sticky plaster and pieces of match-stick. (Imagine the dirt such an erection would accumulate.) The second method is to so arrange a cardboard cylinder round the child's arm that the child cannot bend his elbow. These methods are psychologically unsound. Slight thumb-sucking will not harm the child's mouth. The bad thumb-sucker is the lonely child, the jealous child or otherwise unhappy child, and the remedy is obvious.—RHODA LILLIE (Otautau).

TIME-TABLE SUGGESTIONS

Sir,—The lovers of light classical music derive great satisfaction from the *Masters in Lighter Mood* programmes which are broadcast. These programmes are excellently selected, and bring pleasure not only to friends of classical music but are a great means of education towards musical appreciation for people to whom classical music is too difficult. Lately, however, these programmes have been cut, as the time interferes with the recordings of the "Greetings of the Boys Overseas." May I suggest to change the time of the *Masters in Lighter Mood* programme to 9.20 after the news. This would cut nobody short, as at that time usually serious music is broadcast, and it would increase the popularity of these excellent programmes.

Further, I would like to suggest the relay of the "Discussion for the Forces" A.E.W.S. programme over all main stations. This programme is broadcast at 6.45 p.m. every Wednesday from 2YA, and in different parts of the Dominion this station is not always too clear. The A.E.W.S. Discussion Group is much better than the "Brains Trust" Group, and there are few of my friends who do not tune in regularly to listen to this delightful session.—F.M. (Pukemiro).