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Speaking Candidly, by G.M.

WHAT READERS THINK

DEAR G.M.,

I got a great kick out of reading the replies to my letter to you, but "M.R.", Hamilton, seems to have missed the point. Everyone naturally wants a picture to be criticised on its merits, but my point was that it should be someone who can cater to the average picture-goer, and not just to the "one per cent" people. In other words—the masses of the people probably like what G.M. doesn't like.

"M.R." sounds like an intolerant prig; just like the person who wrote in asking for more heavy classical music, and saying that there was far too much "tripe" on the air—tripe meaning the kind of music that he, personally, didn't like. The man didn't realise that the reason there was so much "sweet" music was because that was what the public wanted. (Listen to any request session).

I suggest that "M.R." should go only to intelligent films, and let those of us who want to, and that means the large majority, wallow in "tripe." I for one don't want to be educated up to "intelligent" films. I go to relax, and I like them Hollywood style. A friend of mine didn't like *Since You Went Away*. He said it was far too sentimental, but I enjoyed it. Incidentally he is a crusty bachelor of 38. He wouldn't be able to understand that a woman married for 18 years could feel that way about her husband. Perhaps "M.R." is like that.

Incidentally I read "G.M.'s" reviews because I want to. I am quite prepared to allow that other people may have different views to mine.

(MRS.) A. MARTIN (Lower Hutt).

* * *

WITH that very sincere reiteration of her viewpoint (which I respect, though of course I do not support it), Mrs. Martin has exercised her right of reply and this particular correspondence must be regarded as closed. No further space can be spared to print in full a number of other letters, from both sides in the argument, which have come in since the first batch was published. However, here are a few of the points made by some of these later correspondents:

A.S. (Invercargill) says he has discovered that, in spite of a previous denial, I am unfairly prejudiced against M-G-M films, as such, and in favour of Warner Bros., and suggests that until I have overcome "these prejudices" I should stop reviewing the films of these two studios. (The evidence he produces to support these assertions is absurd, but I shall let it pass.) In general this correspondent agrees with Mrs. Martin, and says: "Critics are always complaining of the tendency of producers to make box-office pictures, but surely they realise that the film industry is primarily a commercial venture."

"Good Luck" (Auckland) is, as his pen-name suggests, on what I regard as the right side of the fence, but comments incidentally that the present system of grading films is too inelastic.

Azile Stephens, who describes herself as a "loyal reader from Nelson," says she quite agrees with Mrs. Martin that movies are provided for entertainment—but why not good entertainment?

E. H. Belford (Wellington) "complains mildly" at my "determined attitude towards any entertainment that is presented for entertainment value alone," citing my review of *The Impatient Years* as a case in point.

"The Dinkum Oil," who gives his address as "outside of Hollywood," writes exuberantly and rather incoherently in support of Mrs. Martin. At least I think he does. In particular he wants to know where was the song in *The Song of Bernadette*. Perhaps, he suggests, it was the song the advertisers made "cracking it up."

G. Edwards gets into the argument all the way from Bendigo, Victoria, with a letter disagreeing with Mrs. Martin and supporting my statements about *Colonel Blimp*.

Finally, an "open letter to Mrs. Martin" has been received from B.M., Wellington. After complimenting Mrs. Martin on her "refreshing frankness," and analysing the meaning of "criticism" and "entertainment" from his viewpoint and hers, he concludes with a paragraph which I may perhaps be excused for quoting:

"The critic is a man worthy of respect. He brings to his calling considerable erudition, which he uses for the most part selflessly in the spade work of art. The limelight seldom touches him, except when people fail to understand what he is doing. I find G.M. a most genial and urbane critic, and his views are more readable than most. Having recently returned from overseas, I can say with confidence that he more than holds his own with the best over there. And although in England and America the critic's function may be, and often is, ignored, it is never questioned."

THE LITTLE MAN

To the Editor,

Sir,—After having read G.M.'s very interesting and constructive criticism of *Madame Curie*, I should be interested to hear more about the attitude of his "Little Man" which has puzzled me for some time. I always understood that a stand-up clap is the highest praise he can confer on a film well-nigh perfect. G.M. quite rightly finds fault with some parts of *Madame Curie*, as he did to even a larger extent with *The Song of Bernadette* and *Casablanca*. Yet these three pictures all received his personal Academy Reward. I was—perhaps wrongly—under the impression that this distinction was reserved for performances where no such faults could be detected.

I have too high an opinion of G.M.'s integrity as a critic to assume that the Little Man gets up in deference to the film companies concerned and would therefore like to know why he jumps up in this impetuous way?

(continued on next page)

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