

Rewards and Services

THE British Government's decision last week not to give money grants to the leaders of the armed forces was courageous but just. It is not easy to break a tradition which half the population strongly approve and the other half do not greatly resent, and Mr. Attlee must be praised for his firmness. But it is possible to approve of what he has done and yet to have read it with sadness. If we could go on rewarding generals and admirals with a clear social conscience most of us would wish to do it; but we can't. The position is roughly as Captain Upham put it the other day when he refused a free farm: neither victories nor honours are won by individuals. They are won by all the men and women in the battle line and for miles behind it, and although it may be easy to say that one combatant's contribution is greater than another's, it is not possible to say that the difference justifies riches for three or four generations in one case and service pay only for all the others. It is of course still true that generals, and especially admirals, may win or lose a war. History will probably show that it was the orders given by Hitler which lost the war against Russia; and although losing is easier than winning, it is possible to imagine situations—not many certainly during the last six years—in which victory would depend on the decision of one man. It would be outrageous to refuse a reward to that man if the only point at issue were how much we owed him—or even how much by comparison with some others. But there is no stage in a battle at which we can separate contributions and measure them: although armies have sometimes won battles without generals, or in spite of them, while generals have never won without armies, victory comes normally to good soldiers who are well led, and who all do their full duty. Virtue in that case has to be its own reward without distinction of persons, and that is the hard decision Mr. Attlee has now announced.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ALLOWANCES.

Sir,—*The Listener* has had its leg pulled. In the article "These Family Allowances" it quotes the reaction of a "Communist." Any Communist would disagree completely with the opinion of your "Communist."

One does get rather tired of the eccentric statements of self-styled "Communists," who always seem to be accepted as such on their own statement without question—despite, in most cases, their obvious ignorance of the meaning of the word. Might one suggest that if a Communist opinion is wanted *The Listener* should find an authentic one? If a search is too troublesome, the Communist Party is listed in the phone book. And to set the record straight—Communists have for many years advocated family allowances.

A. JACKSON-THOMAS (Auckland).

(Our correspondent's aim appears to be to make it clear that good Communists get their opinions from party headquarters.—Ed.)

BRITISH AND AMERICAN FILMS

Sir,—R. Evans's letter on British and American films is little short of ludicrous. To accuse G.M. of "slavishly bestowing eulogy on the poorest of British films," etc., is nonsense, for he has indeed unfavourably criticised these—unnecessarily at times: for instance, "Mill on the Floss" which was in my opinion superior to many favourably reviewed American films. Nor does G.M. "time and time again make below-the-belt hits at American films." I think R. Evans would be surprised if he (or she) counted up the number of such films that G.M. has praised. However, G.M. has a clarity of vision that does, on the whole, see right through the bogus sentimentality and overwhelming egotism of numbers of American films.

Because the Americans aided us (and incidentally themselves) in this war, does it mean that we are to allow this huge influx of rubbishy films that inundates us to pass uncriticised and uncommented on? Because we have seen little but American films for many years and consequently some of us have had our taste spoiled and blunted, does this mean that American films are superior to British? Of course not!

R. Evans contradicts himself when he accuses the British of melodrama and then self-consciousness. The two qualities don't go together. The "introverted" nature of the British is in reality a controlled one—which is eminently right in an adult nation. Consequently their films contain a sincerity lacking in American films. In fact sincerity is the key-note of British films, and so we are not wearied with an artificial atmosphere of applied glamour, counterfeit emotion and such things as cloy the palate and try the patience.

PARNASSUS (Auckland).

Sir,—Although R. Evans can boast of being a New Zealander of four generations, he shows no love of the fair play so inherent in the British character. His remarks about G.M. are most unfair. G.M. knows his job, does it well, and for fair and intelligent criticism, there is no one in New Zealand to touch him. As regards British films, does R. Evans realise that all the British films we are now seeing in New Zealand are

3-4 years old, and were made in "the front line." And if this same "front line" of civilians had not been able to "stand up to it," R. Evans would not be in the position to-day to be able to write and express freely his opinion of British films, actors and photography or anything else. He would be under Nazi Rule!

DOROTHY BLACK (St. Heliers).

Sir,—I am surprised you let R. Evans get away with so much pure nonsense. For instance, you could have told him that if he hasn't seen a British film without any swearing in it, he hasn't seen enough to qualify him to compare them with American films. And you allowed him to try and tell us that it was the British films that went in for overdone melodrama. What a laugh that one was. However—such is freedom of speech, I suppose.

It is true enough that American films show some technical superiority over British productions. That is a natural result of the comparative scale and experience of the industry in the two countries. But to make disparaging comparisons of British and American actors to the discredit of the former is to ignore the large proportion of British actors among the stars of the American films. What about Greer Garson, Ronald Coleman, Charles Laughton, David Niven, Deborah Kerr, Robert Donat, and Walter Pidgeon, to select a few?

E. G. RIDLEY (Wellington).

Sir,—The letter on British and American films written by R. Evans of Auckland was, to say the least, ingenuous. Apparently he considers that, as he is a New Zealander of four generations, he is qualified to take such an insular attitude. With all the bombast associated with his precious American

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 24 and 25.

films he "proudly adds his name to his heartfelt opinion" and at the same time condemns others (G.M. included) as having "glaring smallness of spirit and hateful resentment" when they also surely express their own opinion. It is obvious that R. Evans has never lived in either Great Britain or the U.S.A. I have lived for a period in both of those countries and am also a New Zealander of five generations, which should appeal to his sense of values.

It is my impression that the British film faithfully portrays British life as it is and has been, with great accuracy observed in even the smallest detail. I would not be so prejudiced that I would condemn all American films out of hand. There are, very occasionally, some excellent films produced in Hollywood and I notice that G.M.'s "little man" will even give them a stand up clap if they're worth it. But there are many discriminating people who are not content with Hollywood's poor fare and welcome the pleasant respite which the British quota affords.

RAYMOND HARVEY (Wellington).

Sir,—The forcefulness of R. Evans's attack on G.M.'s criticism of films has left me cold. His opinion is apparently final. One wonders if he lives in the

To All Correspondents

MANY of the letters in this issue have been cut in halves. Others received have been so long that even a 50 per cent. cut would not have been sufficient. We must warn all correspondents again that letters which exceed 150 words have a poor chance of publication.

clouds, as nobody without prejudice could deny that for real life films, Britain cannot be beaten. Granted the Americans know how to put over the glamorous chorus-girl type of movie, but for actual everyday topics Hollywood hasn't an idea. Every small detail is exaggerated. One wonders just how many British films R. Evans has seen. I grant that some British films are scrappy, but to completely wipe them is as laughable as Hollywood attempts of filming ordinary people.

A. M. EAGLES (Devonport).

ENGLISH PLACE NAMES

Sir,—"Homey" in his objection to the pronunciation of Yarmouth probably raises more problems than the particular one he seeks to cure. He says the correct pronunciation is Yarmuth, but this use of the written alphabet, without distinguishing marks, can be very misleading. Does he realise that the spoken alphabet has forty-three sounds, and the written alphabet has only twenty-six to represent them, and five of these are superfluous, while thirteen vowel sounds are represented to the eye in more than one hundred different ways? Yare in England can quite easily be Yare, Ya-er, Ye-ar, but suppose we agree that it is the Yare of Yarrow, then muth can easily be mooth or muther as Sandy Powell would say. Probably the sound that "Homey" wants to convey is the moth in mother, given in the Oxford Dictionary at mudh and in another as muth. This does not alter the fact that the modern standard English is Yarmouth, but there is nothing to hinder the inhabitants calling it what they like.

ARGOSY (Te Awamutu).

Sir,—"Homey's" criticism of the Dunedin barrister's pronunciation is in the same taste as similar criticisms. Holding fast to his pronunciation of "Yarmouth," no doubt he reserves the right to pronounce the names of the capitals of France and Austria as "Par-is" and "Vee-en-nuh." — 4TH GENERATION ENZEDDER (Piopio).

SOLO VIOLINIST.

Sir,—I listened with the greatest pleasure to the excellent rendering of the Slavonic and Spanish dances from 2YA last Sunday evening by Vincent Aspey. It is many months since Mr. Aspey made a solo broadcast, most of his time being devoted to the splendid String Quartet from 2YA. I would suggest that the Broadcasting Board give us more of this fine soloist.

MILTON W. DILWORTH (Auckland)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Numbers (Wellington).—Sent to the promoters.

"Very Interested" (Napier).—No space for the deluge of replies your letter would bring.