

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

Girls in Blue

IF our cover picture requires an explanation it is because most of us accept as our right what comes to us free. We accepted the cars that met transports through the whole period of the war, the girls who drove them, and the surrender of liberty and leisure that went with every journey, because they never failed. If we had been asked to provide this service ourselves, to pay for it, and to take our share of the endless tasks it involved, we should know what that uniform means, and how much discipline and training were accepted by those who qualified to wear it. The story was told in part in an Armistice Day broadcast, but no story can be told adequately in a few minutes, and it is in any case easier to forget than to remember. Let us not forget. Let us remember that no such service comes into existence on the word of any individual high or low; that it does not spring up in a night, even under the stimulus of war; that emotions die down long before any job is carried through; and that this particular job went on only because those directing it and those carrying it out kept a little fire burning inside that a less cynical age would have called a conscience. Whatever we call it, it kept them going, not for a week or two or a month or two but for the long duration of the war—800 cars, 800 drivers, meeting transports and hospital ships, calling for the incapacitated afterwards and taking them to specialists or to football matches, always available wherever the call came from, in most cases with their own cars, and sometimes with their own petrol. Altogether they covered nearly 3,000,000 miles; and although as time went on they were organised into sections and units like an army, with local and district commanders, the rule remained that every member must own a car or be able to guarantee the use of one. It was also a point of honour among them that they should bear their own running costs—and become good enough mechanics to do minor repairs themselves. Add drill; add first-aid; add courses in A.R.P. and resuscitation—and we have a few of the reasons why they took the petrol as their emblem (a bird that never rests).

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

DAVID LOW

Sir,—In your issue November 5-11 you have an article by Tom Driberg, M.P., giving a "pen portrait" of Low. On page 7 under the sub-heading "The First Cartoon" it appears that David, born in 1891 (which is correct) was, at the age of 11, taken "away from school, schooling not being compulsory then in New Zealand."

In the Christchurch Boys' High School magazine of May, 1923, there is a letter from David Low dated 11th December, 1922, which has this sentence: "It is difficult to realise that it is twenty years since I squirted ink on Mr. Merton's walls. Ah me!" and just below it is recorded that Low was at the school in 1905 and 1906, that is, when he was 14 and 15. These latter dates are, I think, the authentic ones.

Mr. Driberg should perhaps be informed that it was the Education Act of 1877 which made primary education in New Zealand "free, compulsory, and secular."

F. A. DE LA MARE (Hamilton).

BRITISH AND AMERICAN FILMS.

Sir,—I was amazed at the onslaught on R. Evans for his opinion on G.M.'s criticisms. I, too, am a 4th generation New Zealander and I heartily agree with R. Evans. G.M. used to give a reliable criticism, but the war has warped his views somewhat. His outlook is so pro-British he can't see beyond British films. I found *The Way Ahead* bearable; *This Happy Breed* commonplace; *Western Approaches* boring to tears. The colouring in the latter was excellent, but I noticed Natalie Kalmus supervised it. *On Approval*, which G.M. lauds this week, was the last dying gasp of Clive Brook as a romantic star. The photography was poor, and the waspish Beatrice Lillie was not entertaining. I struggled to keep awake, but went home wishing I'd stayed there.

I don't like many American films, and wouldn't see Betty Grable and Company on even a free pass. But the best British stars are in Hollywood, where the best pictures are made, even if the worst also come from there. As for the correspondent who claims to be a 5th generation New Zealander, I think he's too young to know what he's talking about.

"FAIRPLAY" (Upper Hutt).

Sir,—From the letter by Dorothy Black championing British films, it would appear that although the British "took it" throughout the War, some, anyhow, simply cannot "take it" as far as criticism is concerned—in fact, they cannot even bear anyone to prefer American films to British without losing their equanimity! To threaten that I would not be able to express my opinion had not Britain held the fort seems almost to suggest that because of Britain's stand during the war she (nor any of her products) must never in future be subject to criticism of any kind—external or internal! I notice many people adopt this Gestapo method which, although bullying enough, is not really frightening or even convincing as far as the present subject is concerned. After all, England was receiving American armament aid while holding the fort and had it not been for Russian and American intervention England may not now have been holding the fort at all,

and, although all this is really quite irrelevant, in order to reply adequately to Dorothy Black one could mention that had it not been for the Americans in the Pacific she herself would not now be freely expressing her opinions! As to the suggestion that the Americans aided themselves as well as us—this is true of every country—ourselves no less. England knew she would be the next to be attacked by Germany when she entered the War—had we been fighting purely for the freedom of aggressed peoples we would have entered the War when China was attacked instead of supplying Japan with scrap-iron which was used in bombing China!

However, now that "freedom" has been gained by an Allied effort, surely one can express an opinion or utter a criticism within one's own walls without such a torrent of abuse, which does not help one jot to convert me to the idea that English films are superior. And although it seems inconsistent to "Parnassus" I have noticed that self-conscious natures do try to offset their shyness by overdone melodrama—I have noticed in it real life, too. I have met many folk who

More letters from listeners will be found on page 25.

declare they prefer British films, and by way of giving an example, quote *Mrs. Miniver* or *Goodbye Mr. Chips* and other American films merely in an English setting! After all it is to Hollywood's credit that they have made films "set" in nearly almost every country. And when E. Ridley asks what about Greer Garson, Ronald Colman, Charles Laughton, Robert Donat, and Walter Pidgeon, I consider this is the best possible argument he could have given me in favour of the American film—for are not these actors Hollywood stars who act in American-directed pictures? After all, the direction counts for a lot, and evidently these stars realised the superiority of American films over British or else why did they migrate to America?

R. EVANS (Auckland).

SEX KNOWLEDGE.

Sir,—I must admit I was rather surprised by the turn "Enlightened Wife" gave to my letter. I hasten to assure her I am all for her. I very much admire "Enlightened Wife's" brave facing up to a mother's responsibility to enlighten her children in sex matters. I am all in support. With "a woman of nearly 60 with 32 years of married happiness behind her" I would hate to disagree. She has the benefit of experience. What I objected to was Miss Mead's dismissal of missionary endeavour to establish Christian ideas of sex as vain and unimportant. She appears to me to belong to the small troupe who belittle our own civilisation to extol native cultures. They little know what they do.

J. DURNING (Okato).

Sir,—I wish to endorse every word "Enlightened Wife" has written about this subject. I have suffered the exact reverse of her experience and, regretably, I am no exception. So hush-hush was my upbringing that while living on a farm, where questions naturally come early, I learnt at the age of seven never

to approach my parents with sex questions. When ten years old this very ignorance caused me an experience so terrifying that I was afraid to ride the lonely road to school, lying awake at night dreading it. Yet there was no one I could tell in my own home. I have children now, but I live in my married life with exactly the home surroundings that "Enlightened Wife" so aptly describes, and justly fears, for our younger generation.

To save the present-day marriages and future families, we should have trained men and women or selected doctors where young couples may seek information without any of the sensations of shame and inferiority that always follow continued marital sex failure.

BETRAYED WIFE (via Frankton Junction).

CLASSICAL RECITAL

Sir,—2YC on the 11th November gave the odd title of "Classical Recital" to an airing of gramophone records including works by Debussy, Poulenc, Stravinsky, and Gershwin. I do not suggest we should follow Chinese example with European music and extend the term "Modern Music" to include, say, Palestrina. But if Debussy is a classical composer, then Cezanne, Seurat, Van Gogh are classical painters, and if Stravinsky is not a modern, then Jacob Epstein and Praxiteles are for all practical purposes one and the same guy.

J.H. (Wellington).

THOMAS MOORE

Sir,—I have always thought that there is no better value in any country for 12/- a year than *The Listener*. In all humility I read you from cover to cover and mostly learn something from every page. But twice lately I have thought that one of your writers could do with some learning too. This week he is being witty at the expense of Thomas Moore, whom he calls the Regency Sinatra. He says Sinatra and his kind of songs are on a par with, firstly, Moore's "Bendemeer." I've never heard Frankie or his kind sing it, but many times have heard John Charles Thomas do so. Secondly, I have heard the world's best singers, including Melba, sing "Believe Me If All" and many of Moore's melodies. As I write, the announcer from 2YA is telling us that "Emmy Bettendorf will now sing 'The Last Rose of Summer' by Flotow." That song (the words are by Moore) had whisksers on it long before Flotow was born, but he was man enough, or musician enough to admit that he borrowed it for his opera *Marta*. The air, "The Groves of Blarney" was written by an Irishman—in Ireland—round about Noah's time, and apparently Flotow could find no better words for the air than Moore's. Beethoven too arranged it as a vocal solo.

Moore's many admirers never claimed that he was the poet that his friend Byron was, because he was a writer of songs, which Byron was not. Byron, though he seems to have had a pretty low opinion of all the English bards and Scots reviewers of his time, wrote that "Moore's melodies were worth all the epics ever composed."

YOU BEGANIT (Kelburn).

ANSWERS to CORRESPONDENTS
E.C. (Stoke).—Sent to Director of Broadcasting.

H. Shaw (Eskdale).—Appreciated.
Justice (New Plymouth).—Political. Not for us.

J. Melling (Huntly) and several other correspondents.—We do not arrange the programmes. We print them.

"Epagle" (New Plymouth).—When we want an Aunt Sally we shall place her in position ourselves.