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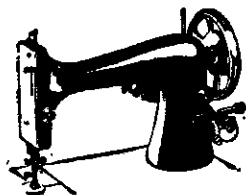
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VIKELP MINERAL TABLETS

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

FILM CRITICISM

Sir,—Your correspondent R. E. Stevens, is plainly of the opinion that, because he has seen so many films, he is at liberty to dogmatise upon the subject of criticism, of which, still more plainly he has little knowledge. Film and theatrical criticism, both closely allied, conform to a set of principles which, although not as stringent as those ruling literary criticism, must nevertheless be adhered to. One of the most important things to remember, although strictly speaking it is not a principle, is that positive assertion cannot be tolerated. The critic is in the unenviable position of having to please, or appease, a public which, whatever else it might have, lacks a singleness of mind. I do not mean that he should be vacillating in his opinions, quite the reverse, but definitely not dogmatic. It is his task to judge a film and, with reservation, to pass that judgement on to the people. The majority of critics, and G.M. is one, honestly endeavour to judge a film on its merits, whether or not it fulfils the purpose for which it is produced. And, for example, where morals are concerned the critic has a responsibility and a duty to discharge to the public. One critic (writing on literary criticism) avers that a book should be weighed solely on its internal merits, taking no account of the external factors which influence its composition. The same is true of films. Mentioning the characters, in this light, is surely an irrelevant detail, and to condemn a critic because he does not append a list of principles is absurd.

Finally I would like to remind R. E. Stevens that if he were to see ten thousand films, it would still not entitle him to state vehemently that a criticism is "completely wrong." G.M. offered an opinion only about the *White Cliffs of Dover*—one which many hundreds of theatregoers agreed was "completely right." I, for one, did.

D. SOTHERAN (Westport).

Sir,—Your correspondent R.E.S. may well know something about films (I am tempted to say in spite of having seen 1,400), but I suggest an analogy to him. Presumably he has at some time seen a number of cars passing along a road—does that act of seeing necessarily imply a working knowledge of those cars? We have had many letters in praise of, and derogatory to, G.M. as a film critic, but not till now has anyone asserted that he is completely wrong. A bold statement—so bold that omission of a reason for such a statement was a very wise choice.

I suggest to your correspondent, first that he find out the actors in a coming film from his local paper and leave G.M. to his own devices; and second, that he take as his motto "Each to his own craft."

J.B. (Waverley).

Sir,—Why all this heat about G.M.'s reviews? For my part I had almost given up the movies until G.M.'s advent. It used to be one good one in seven. Trusting G.M. now I never see a poor one. Yet the film people don't seem grateful for the extra money and even G.M.'s

readers cavil at him. He is the modern whipping-boy, condemned to look at much rubbish for our sake.

The Suspect, This Happy Breed, San Demetrio London, Going My Way, Song of Bernadette, all deserved top honours. If *Colonel Blimp* didn't get them at any rate it got and deserved the sit-down clap.

As for the English and American argument; at one time a great many people had become disgusted with the unfair Quota system, with the leering and vulgar Tom Wall's bedroom scenes, with the amateurish English production and photography, and had come to regard the humour of English producers as a laughing matter. It was G.M. who told us those days were past and English producers at long last were equalling and surpassing their American opposite numbers.

MALTESE FALCON (Wellington).

FREE VERSE

Sir,—J.W.B.'s attack is typical of that of many who do not understand the writing of our modern poets, who write for people who feel the same emotions as the poets themselves. It may be an emotion not commonly felt; but the poet has his message, and does not write for those who cannot understand it. He believes the form chosen is the best to convey his meaning; he does not believe his "effort" needs "shaping" beyond the form in which he leaves it. Furthermore, in free verse are hidden many conscious subtleties which do bring about a kind of rhythm, e.g., sprung rhythm, not unlike Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, and kinds of rhyme, e.g., pararhyme; while the texture is such that it produces the right variations of speed in the rhythm. There are many principles of operation, some of which Edith Sitwell reveals in her notebook.

Wordsworth and Coleridge received a similar reception "exploiting" something new and different, and though I may not understand E. E. Cummings, or even Peter Quennell and T. S. Eliot, I shall not condemn those whom some can understand and do appreciate.

IKTHUS (Auckland).

Sir,—If a prize were awarded for the wittiest letter to appear in your columns it should surely go to that correspondent who (some time ago) briefly pointed out that there is in fact a New Zealand counterpart of Australia's "O'Malley." I wish you could find space to reprint the letter. We owe to its author our best laugh of the year.

ANOPHELES (Wellington).

Sir,—Poems are mirrors of time reflecting the ego of one, the trend of a mass. Following the sun of Shakespeare, the moon-pallor of Milton reflected the mind of a people, the ego of one; even as Pope, the polisher of brass, mirrored his age with another device. In our quickening day, increasingly jarred, a poem reflects by loosened form and with tightened words, intense and sharp.

(I have written the above to prove that free verse can be detected when cast as prose. Much of what is called Biblical prose is free verse.)

WALLACE GAITLAND
(Invercargill).

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