

## India Goes Free

IT would be reckless, writing a few hours after the Viceroy's broadcast, to discuss the events of the last few days in India. But it is permissible to look back a few months and forward a few years, and in both directions the view is fairly clear. India is this week taking the high road to national independence—in one group or in two. It may or may not remain in the British Commonwealth, but whether it does or does not it will do so by its own decision. Apparently, too, the transfer of power will take place this year and not next. Instead of delaying the change, the British Government has hurried it on, partly for prudential reasons, but partly—let the sneerers sneer—in the spirit of liberty and generosity and good faith. That in fact is the chief meaning and lesson of the whole long story. The day will come when the events of the last few months in India will be a light in a power-drunk world; when Britain's present conduct will be the ammunition of every nation fighting for freedom and the hope of all the victims of the new oppression; when the horrible things in India's last two centuries will be forgotten and mankind will remember only the greatness of these last few weeks. It is not easy to keep the light properly focussed on 300 millions of people divided by religion, language, and age-long tradition, but it is possible now and again to see the picture in something like a general light, and no Briton will blush this week when he gets that long-distance view. The Australian professor who said the other day that "the governance of India has been the most glorious thing in British history" was perhaps being deliberately provocative. But it was not provocation to add this: that when the history of Britain's dealings with India comes to be written, and men can judge as calmly as we judge the history of Ninevah or Babylon, it will be seen that nothing so became Britain as her manner of leaving India. That is an understatement of a fact that should make every lover of Britain to-day walk a little more erect.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## A FARMER'S LIFE.

Sir,—I was very interested in Sundowner's article on Taranaki and farming generally. At first I could not get the hang of it until I read the part about there being practically nothing to do on a dairy farm except milk. Then I realised it was meant to be humorous! Well, sir, I think you will agree it was all in rather bad taste. You surely realise that although we farmers got a good laugh out of it we are not the only readers of *The Listener*. Unable as we are to share the first-class amusements of the town-dweller who has first-class concerts, pictures, and plays to attend, we have to be content with the second-class fare of the wireless. There are many town-dwellers, astounding as it may seem in these enlightened days, who thought your article to be a serious one, and they might get the idea that a dairy farmer has no top dressing to do, lime to spread, manure to spread, autumn and winter feeding to do, ploughing, and sowing, chain harrowing, drains to clean, fences to fix, implements to renovate and mend, wood and coal to cart, hedges to trim, pigs and calves to attend to, noxious weeds, gorse, blackberry, thistle, and ragwort to eradicate, gateways to fill with sand, buildings to patch and paint, gates to make, rushes to dig, sick cows to doctor, young pigs to castrate and ring, months of harvesting hay and silage, etc., etc. to do; that life of a dairy farm merely entails six hours a day milking for 360 days in the year including Sundays, Saturdays and all holidays—truly a lovely life if you can afford to pay someone else to do the work while you have, as he says, "days off" as often as you like. Quite a good life if you don't mind slogging in for 65 hours a week for 40 hours' pay.

We don't complain, but in justice to us small farmers I think you should have made it clear it was a rather clever caricature of farming.

## RUSTICUS (Ngahinepouri).

(We are assured by "Sundowner" that what our correspondent complains of was a faithful summary of an actual conversation. For further information about the life of farmers we direct our correspondent to an article on Page 6 of this issue.—Ed.).

## COMPULSORY DOMESTIC SERVICE

Sir,—R.M. accuses me of inconsistency because in dealing with the subject of domestic help for mothers I failed to take up the cudgels on behalf of the lads to be trained compulsorily in the military arts, and asks if I would object to such training. In fact, I did write two pages about just that, then—thinking of space-conserving editors—I firmly blue pencilled the lot as irrelevant.

The two suggested acts of compulsion (domestic and military) are as far apart as the poles. Military service, much as we may object to it theoretically, is a practical and vital necessity in this chaotic world and the necessity for compulsion, together with its wisdom in a given case, must be the test of its virtue. Compulsion is not always wrong. The education of our children is compulsory, yet who finds fault with that?

Certainly my sons will do their share of training, but at the same time I trust that their home teaching will show them that war is a disgrace to our so-called civilisation, bringing no true moral honour to either participant. If they learn to think honestly, the meaning of pacifism will become a life-long fight

against war, even when necessity causes them to carry arms against an aggressor.

If every new batch of schoolboy recruits could have this meaning made clear to them even as they learn to "slope arms," would they not be less inclined to treat war as a glorious adventure, and instead learn a more responsible outlook to world affairs?

If I had my way the Oscar Natzkes would be exempt, but I doubt if they would accept exemption, as I believe that the finer a man's perceptions are, the higher his sense of values will be.

Compulsory domestic training for girls is not a grim necessity. The shortage will be overcome by the many ways which sensible women, such as Caroline Webb, advocate—domestic cleaning companies, etc.—and also by the gradual dying of silly snobbery which sways young girls who otherwise would take up housework as an interesting career. The point is, that we are still free to leave them free to make their choice.

R.M. concludes with "Equality of the sexes if you like. . . ." This catch phrase is always a trouble-maker, and means nothing unless used specifically. In this case it is inapplicable.

—L.L.H. (Heriot).

## SCHOOL UNIFORM AND OTHER THINGS

Sir,—I am probably among a great number of women with daughters at school who will not agree with the writer of the article in your issue for May 23 on school uniforms.

Most of us realise the useful and good reasons for school uniforms, without my further stressing them. Also the discipline such may entail is very good for growing girls. I cannot believe that every Canadian girl is so completely lawless as E. A. Miles would have us believe. Anarchy is all very well when persons are old enough to reason it out for themselves, and provided they believe in such; but most of us feel it is our duty to our daughters to attempt to bring them up sensibly in readiness for the years when they will be old enough to judge what path they will take for themselves.

L. ARMSTRONG (Remuera).

Sir,—The wearing of a uniform is one type of discipline—a good one. A 14-year-old schoolgirl may not like wearing gloves and long black stockings, but it is a mild example of one of the many more unpleasant things that she will have to do all her life. It is only until about half-past four each day that she will be forced to feel "unattractive" in long black stockings (which make her legs look slim), gloves, no jewellery and no lipstick or rouge (though why she should need these cosmetics with the youthful skin and colouring she should have, I do not know). Certainly the uniform of most of our New Zealand public schools is unserviceable. Navy blue is the hardest colour to keep clean of spots and fluff and box-pleated tunics take a long time to press.

At my own school we have no restrictions placed on hair styles, which is a pity, as some hair is really sickening to look at.

I have been to a school where "mufti" was worn, and at my present school we wear uniform. At the first school there was a noticeable difference even in the popularity of the better-dressed girls. All these differences are now entirely absent

because of the uniform and I believe that the school is the better for it.

Also I have noticed that the girls who are "silliest" about the opposite sex are the ones who have no brothers. The fault here does not lie with the teachers or the school regulations, as these same girls are allowed to speak to boys on the street, and they mix with them freely at dancing classes, etc., in the winter and at games, occasionally, in the summer.

"SIXTH FORMER" (Invercargill).

## ARTIST AND SITTER

Sir,—May I be forgiven for picking out a materially (but not spiritually) irrelevant detail from Vernon Brown's letter in the "Corruption of Taste" series? He refers to the occasion on which Lord Leverhulme cut out the head of his portrait by Orpen. This was headline news in London at the time and started a furious controversy on the rights of ownership versus the rights of a work of genius. Mr. Brown's story is right, but his details are wrong. The portrait was by Augustus John.

LONDONER (Milford)

## WHO SAID IT?

Sir,—I am anxious to trace the author and context of the following lines, and would be thankful if any reader can place them:

So Dion fell,  
Seduced by such-like arguments, a man  
Who marred the perfect picture of a life  
By one black smutch at ending.

They somehow sound like Matthew Arnold, but are they his?

L. ETHERINGTON (Auckland).

## THE NIGHT SKY

Sir,—If the last paragraph of E. M. Wilson's letter has again aroused the curiosity of your commentator in the matter of stellar distances let him spend a few moments at the library reading Chapter XI. of Spencer Jones's *Worlds Without End*. This chapter deals lucidly, and with a convenient time scale, with the Spiral Nebulae whose numbers run into millions and whose distances extend to the limits of photographically explored space. Spencer Jones mentions a Nebula at 230 million light years, but the 120-inch telescope being built for the Lick Observatory is expected to reach 900 million light years.

A light year is the distance covered in a year by light travelling at 186,000 miles per second.

A.J.H. (Moa Flat)

## ZB PROGRAMMES

Sir,—I am quite in agreement with "Putiti" and "Six of Us," concerning ZB's birthday programme. I am a Commercial station listener, but after listening to some of the material that is being put over now, traded in my broadcast radio for a shortwave set, much as I hate the poor quality of overseas reception. Only one programme made me arrive at that decision, believe it or not: a so-called Talent Quest over ZB. I don't know how some of those people have the gall to go before the "mike," or why some arrangement isn't introduced whereby an audition is carried out first to select those with reasonable possibilities. I too detest the American, "I am," but I hand it to them that they can arrange programmes.

ANOTHER PUTITI (Karori)