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Men Against Machines

THE campaign in Greece has taken the course that everyone must have expected. Masses of German men and machines have been hurled against the Allied line without regard for anything but the objective. They have of course been hurled with great skill and reckless courage, but the success they have had has been won, not in Greece, but in the factories and parade grounds of the fatherland.

The German method of fighting battles is to win them, as far as that is possible, before they begin; to assemble more guns, more men, more transport, more fighting and bombing planes, than the enemy has any chance of assembling; and then to throw all that into battle without thought of loss—a realistic method that has so far been completely successful.

What then did General Smuts mean the other day when he said that the man in the end would beat the machine? Not that an unarmed man will beat an armed man, or a man partially armed beat a man whose equipment is complete. General Smuts has paid too much for his knowledge to fall back now on such follies. If there are realists in the British Commonwealth they are the South Africans of the General's age who have fought in three wars, carried rifles from childhood, and known the bitterness of defeat by a better armed and better organised opponent. General Smuts does not suppose, and if we had his speech in full we would know that he did not say, that a rifle can beat a machine-gun, or a 300-mile-an-hour fighting plane beat a fighter speeded up to 400 miles. He meant, and we may be sure he said, that other things being equal, moral force is stronger than mechanised force.

In other words we can beat the Germans when we are as well equipped because then we will be better equipped. They can make what we can make mechanically (and so far have kept ahead of us). They can train men as fast as we can train men (and so far have trained far more). But the day will come when they will meet as many machines as they themselves have, and as many men, and each of these men will have a motive and an inspiration that theirs will lack—and that no merely mechanical training can give them. They have built a machine for conquest. We are marshalling the moral forces of freedom to overthrow that machine, and hurl it with its helmsmen to hell.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

NOT ENOUGH SERIALS

Sir,—I think that if "Mere Schoolgirl" had taken the trouble to study the evening programmes from the four main stations before complaining about the number of serials, she would have found that, on the contrary, there are far too few of them. Many others I know, agree with me in saying that since we get music practically all day, we should have one serial every evening in the early part of the programme. As it is, we have serials on Monday evening from 1YA, and then not another until Thursday. There is an excellent serial to be had from Christchurch on Thursday evening also, but unfortunately when the evening programme was changed to 7.30, this serial was put on practically at the same time as the 1YA serial, so one cannot have both. One would like to know also what "Schoolgirl" means by more music. Does she want an increase in such stuff as Billy Cotton's band? There are half a dozen of these shocking dance orchestras, which consist mainly of blaring saxophones to the accompaniment of noisy thumps and screeches, and frequently when a gap has to be filled in, one of these frightful records is put on, which one has to endure to ensure not missing the item one wants. There should be special sessions of this material for those who like it, so that it should not be unexpectedly interspersed in good programmes. During the day, we use our radio only at meal times, and the programmes then are all music, with a very occasional sketch, so I fail to see how anyone could say there are too many serials.—MARY GEE (Auckland).

FAMILY HISTORIES

Sir,—Will you kindly convey my thanks to "Argosy" (Te Awamutu) for his information with regard to my "clan." I already have all those details, in various books of information, besides a copy of the "Family Tree," but did not bother to check up on the "1,000 years" in any of these, as the extract from which I took the information was published in the *Evening Post* some years ago, and written by one signing himself "Old Volunteer," and I naturally presumed that it would be quite authentic. However, again I have checked up and find that on digging up the "Family Tree" from an old ottoman which has not been disturbed for many years, that "Argosy" is quite correct. "Old Volunteer" had stated that the Roses "had occupied the ancestral home for quite a thousand years," evidently it was for something under 800 years, "and so we go on from tragedy to farce." My! what I started when I attacked "Winchester." I've dragged his noble forbears in, and my own, and "Argosy's" and L. Cooney (Mt. Eden). Who next? And I think it all began with "Zebedee" (or did it? More research work for me). But as "Argosy" says "it's great fun."—NEUTRAL (Petone).

GREETINGS FROM —

The following letter from a former contributor to these columns—a radio officer on an overseas ship—has reached us from the void.

Dear Friends,—As Artemus Ward would say "Alas! it cannot was!" . . . Dashed have been my hopes for several weeks now of a visit to your sequestered island and the mental rejuvenation which comes on the sweeping winds of Port Nicholson. . . . Owing to the machinations of that "cockerel on a dunghill" (vide Priestley) we have been diverted hither and thither, and I just can't tell you where we are at the moment as the Captain doesn't quite know where he is himself. . . .

We reached Liverpool just as the Old Year was becoming suspicious of Mrs. Time and was preparing to die of mortification. The big blitz was in progress, and I was in constant fear that the noise and vibration would cause me to cut myself as I was shaving. . . . A day or two before our arrival a "tinfoil" came up just a hundred yards ahead of us—evidently too close to fire at us. We put our stern to him, but by the time we were ready to press our triggers he had submerged. Two days later Lord Haw Haw included us in his usual spate, and gave a few people ashore a nasty shock, but we happened to arrive safely the morning before his broadcast, and the R.A.F. hastened to convey our apologies to him for making him appear to have departed slightly from the truth.

During leave I went to the old home in the north, and walked about a hundred miles in the blackout—so black that I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I did see *The Great Dictator*, *Waterloo Bridge*, and *Pride and Prejudice*; I did a little dancing, renewed my acquaintance with the vicar, organised a fire-extinguishing system in the house with long-handled shovels and seashore sand, and occasionally sneaked into the local pub. But it was cold! Snow, sleet, ice, hail, rain, wind, mud and slush—and the Home Guard praying for a few "incendiaries" so that they could rush from their shelters and make a bit of toast to vary their diet!

One hesitates to write about the international situation. The plasticine frontiers of Europe may have changed before I get this into the mail. But while there are more spies than lice in the Balkans, I guess we must simply go on scratching up God's good earth.

Regards to all in the NBS and *The Listener*.—Thine, —.

IS IT AN ERROR?

Sir,—Something more than the bare assertion by L. D. Austin (in your issue of April 18) is required, if it is to be shown that John Doe is wrong in using "birthday" in its sense of "the anniversary or annual observance of the day of birth of any one." The O.E.D. gives this as one definition of the meaning of the word; and I rely on this as authority for my own assertion that it is Mr. Austin who is wrong in implying that a man's first birthday can be only the day on which he is born. But I will go further, and say that in educated usage the presence of the ordinal "first" indicates clearly that the word is used in its meaning of "anniversary day" and none other; for since a man can be born once only, what need is there to say anything more than "birthday," if the word is intended to convey the idea of "day of birth"? It is significant that the latest quotation in the O.E.D. of the word in this sense dates as far back as 1858. On the other hand, innumerable examples of the use of the expression "twenty-first birthday," to describe the day on which a man attains his majority, are to be found in the best writers of the past and the present.—RICHARD ROE (Wadestown).

LECTURES FOR HOME GUARD

Sir,—Your correspondent "Home Guard," suggesting that the broadcasting authorities should arrange a series of lectures dealing with guardsmen's duties and training, has raised a question which, I think, calls for serious consideration by the NBS. Most units of the Guard at the present time lack not merely equipment, but also trained instructors, but while it is possible to get through quite a lot of valuable training without weapons, specialist instructors are a necessity if guardsmen are to acquire the technical knowledge which their role in any emergency operations would demand.

It is possible, for example, to learn quite a lot about handling grenades or Mills bombs, or digging tank-traps, without actually handling a bomb or an entrenching tool, and until sufficient specialists are available to give instruction to individual units, the radio is the obvious answer to the problem.

—GUARDSMAN (Auckland).