

Replies To Australian Critic

(Continued from previous page)

can hit back hard enough at the end of it to take 6,000 prisoners in ten days, is not a bad army.

A.M. (Wellington).

Sir,—Your review of "Bless 'Em All" by "Boomerang" in *The Listener* of July 17 was very interesting and the illustrations delightful. As your reviewer remarks, however, the writer deliberately exaggerates. He reduces problems to a humorous absurdity which is supposed to make the reader think. However, there are some people who don't think—they merely absorb other people's views especially views which are amusingly expressed. Then they may become dangerous propaganda. There are two sections of the review which I should like to discuss. These are the sections on the related problems of morale and training methods—headed "Wrong End of the Stick" and "As Simple as a Baby's". I wonder what a member of the N.Z. Division overseas would think on reading the summing up of morale. He'd hope that the reading public would use their common sense in accepting "Boomerang's" conclusions. Surely the Army has been trained to endure hardship and face difficulty just as the Navy and Air Force have. The answer is that the New Zealand Division has already faced three gruelling campaigns and is engaged in another.

Then there's the example "Boomerang" has given of the Blimpish colonel who exhorted his men to do their gun-drill properly "or I will make you double round the square holding the rifle above your head." It looks as if "Boomerang" may have misunderstood. Everyone makes jokes about Scotsmen, and many of the best jokes are deliberately perpetrated by Scotsmen against themselves. Isn't it rather the same in the Army? No one would think of taking such a threat very seriously. Even Blimpish colonels know that there's a serious reason for training men in defence and attack.

One doesn't hear much about "Blimps" from the men overseas. There is in the

New Zealand Division a body of young, keen men who take their responsibilities seriously and intelligently. I feel that the public should realise that the passages referred to are not meant to represent the whole truth.

My brother is serving overseas as a major. He began in the Territorials under the volunteer system, and he is only one of many who took a lively interest in affairs of national concern throughout the years when the Army was considered almost an excrescence. Here I quote from some of his recent letters written while the N.Z. Division was in Syria. These are the unsolicited views of a man on the spot.

"Two or three times a week I have to lecture the troops on current affairs. Yesterday I gave one on the French Navy and Mediterranean strategy. To-morrow I'm giving one on the Rulers of Japan. A miscellaneous selection of reading in the past is proving useful now, and the Army puts a great deal of emphasis on this. On Friday I gave the men a lecture, this time on British Shipping and Vital Sea-Routes, a subject I had my heart in. The men are interested and ask intelligent questions. Now and again we arrange for volunteers to give lectures. One of the drivers gave a most interesting talk on machine-tools, sawmilling and the timber industry, and a bombardier gave us a lecture on American industry, so controversial that I am now going to start a debating club.

"I went out with one troop on a route march and map-reading expedition. Within limits I have practically a free hand in making up the week's training directive, and these expeditions are very popular. We have walking and hill climbing, map-reading and compass work, which are the instructional side of the outing, but it is mostly picnic. I am quite sure that it is a better way of getting the men fit than a dreary march along a road, and they thoroughly enjoy it. Next week they are going to practise attacking and 'infiltration', also such pleasures as a night march by compass. The men can be kept interested if one takes a very little trouble."

HELEN BROTHERTON
(Wellington).

Sir,—I came across this passage the other day, and it may be worth recalling:

And why was all this striving against insurmountable difficulties? Why were men sent thus to slaughter, when the application of a just science would have rendered the operation comparatively easy? Because the English Ministers, so ready to plunge into war, were quite ignorant of its exigencies; because the English people are warlike without being military, and under pretence of maintaining a liberty which they do not possess, oppose in peace all useful martial establishments. Expatiating in their schools and colleges upon Roman discipline and Roman valour, they are heedless of Roman institutions; they desire, like that ancient republic, to be free at home and conquerors abroad, but start at perfecting their military system, as a thing incompatible with a constitution, which they yet suffer to be violated by every Minister who trembles at the exposure of corruption. In the beginning of each war, England has to seek in blood for the knowledge necessary to ensure success, and like the fiend's progress towards Eden, her conquering course is through chaos followed by death.

This was written over a hundred years ago by Sir William Napier, the historian of the Peninsula War, in which he served. I don't suggest it applies in every respect to-day, but it does explain a good deal in the history of the British Army.

STUDENT (Wellington).

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D. 35

Second Front

(By WHIM-WHAM)

I WANT to see a Second Front
As much as Anyone;
I want to see the Tables turned,
The Axis on the Run;
I'd like to know just when and where
And how it can be done.

NOT that I want our Strategists
To be precipitate;
I know how nobly they can serve
Who only stand and wait;
But Fortune has no Favours for
Those who procrastinate.

IN spite of such impatient Hopes
I try to keep in View
The Fact that I could not be told
What they are going to do,
Without considerable Risk
Of telling Hitler too!

QUITE frankly, I do not expect
That I shall be advised
Whether or when these Hopes of mine
Are to be realised;
And I'm content the Date and Place
Should not be advertised,
So long as Hitler and myself
Are equally surprised!