

AUGUST 28, 1942.

Sentimental Journey

THE trouble with the war is that we shrink from saying what we feel most strongly about it. Rather than be romantic we would be stupid and cowardly, and so the most elementary truths remain unspoken. Not one of us dares to say all he feels about Mr. Churchill's visit to Russia in case someone else calls him sentimental. It is more than we can bear to be suspected of thinking, and to be almost capable of saying, that now most of the suspicions between Moscow and London have been dispelled. Far less would we dare to suggest that Moscow and New York are now together. But deep down we all harbour such thoughts and cherish such hopes and know that if they are false the war is lost. Whatever additional reasons Mr. Churchill had for going to Moscow his fundamental reason was to convince Mr. Stalin, and through him the Russian army and people, that the British Government and British people were with them and wanted to draw closer to them. To do this he had to show himself, let his own personality play on Stalin and Stalin's on his until doubt disappeared. In short he went to Russia armed only with goodwill; in other words with emotion; in other words with sentiment. It was a sentimental journey with, he hoped—as we all hope—a sentimental meeting and a sentimental ending. Stalin would like him better afterwards and he would like Stalin better, and the flow of their feelings would resolve their most obstinate questionings. They would of course call things by different names than these, even to themselves, and set their central problem in a different light. But it was a sentimental problem just the same, and if we wished to be brutally realistic we should have to say that the future of millions of men hung for some hours last week on the capacity of two men of 68 and 63 to be human beings.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

CROSSWORD ARITHMETIC.

Sir,—According to V. Garfield Brown, your crossword puzzle takes an hour to solve and your paper an hour to read, the deletion of the puzzle therefore costing him half *The Listener's* value. As this same puzzle takes me at least three hours to solve, am I justified in claiming a reduction in my subscription of seventy-five per cent?

PLAIN BROWN (Remuera).

(No. See Proverbs 3, 27.—Ed.)

THE BRITISH ARMY.

Sir,—Your correspondent Helen Bretherton would have been wiser to wait until she could read *Bless 'Em All* before venturing to discuss your review of the book. She may have answered an imaginary criticism of the morale of the

Correspondents Please Note

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should not exceed 200 words, 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.

New Zealand Division in the Middle East: she has not even begun to answer "Boomerang's" criticism in *Bless 'Em All* about the training and morale of the British Army shut up in the British Isles. In fact, "Boomerang" specifically excluded from his strictures troops like those from Australia and New Zealand who are serving outside Great Britain and who have something to keep them occupied.

As for the jokes about the Blimps in the Army being as harmless as jokes about Scotsmen, your correspondent has not only omitted to read the book: she even appears to have neglected to read your review. For you draw special attention to "Boomerang's" point that jokes about mothers-in-law do not mean that mothers-in-law don't exist. Rather the contrary. And that applies also to Scotsmen and Blimps.

ANTI-BLIMP (Wellington).

WOMEN ON EDUCATION BOARDS

Sir,—May I—as one of those you describe as "pleasantly warmed by the news that . . . women are standing as candidates for the Wellington Education Board"—refer to your interview with one of these ladies? Your contributor quotes her as describing the work of the boards as "unspeakably tedious" and "boring"; regretting that knitting would not be welcomed and, strangest of all, saying "I don't suppose I shall enjoy the work." Since this curious delusion may discourage some of your readers who might otherwise seek seats on Education Boards, let me say that, in ten years membership of a board, I have found every meeting packed with interest and I do not believe that any intelligent woman would have wanted to knit. If lengthy correspondence, such as this lady dislikes, does come from school committees, it reaches the board in brief and crisp précis at the hands of the secretary. Members are supposed to know what is happening in their own wards; the board expects expert comment from them and generally gets it. The very pleasant contacts which we

make with members of school committees—many of whom are enthusiastic in the cause of education and the children—more than compensate for all the time given to the work, and it is an honour as well as a pleasure to meet our teachers and to learn in what capable hands young New Zealand finds itself. I can promise any woman member intensely interesting work and a complete absence of boredom.

A BOARD MEMBER (Mapua).

BRAINS TRUST WANTED.

Sir,—The NBS has shown itself quick to adapt the best elements of BBC entertainment for broadcast in New Zealand, but what about the most popular BBC session of them all? What about a Brains Trust for New Zealand, or do we not trust the brains we have? There are thousands of men and women here, in camp and factory, shop and office and home, who would provide questions, and scores of men and women, prominent in business, scholarship, and the Public Service, who have the talent (and in some cases the genius) to make such a session not only entertaining but intellectually stimulating to the *nth* degree. The Director of Broadcasting could, I am sure, assemble a first-class panel in five minutes and it would be difficult to find a better compère than the Director himself.

COGITO ERGO SUM (Auckland).

CHAMBER MUSIC

Sir,—Perhaps the only place in which true democracy has ever been achieved is the realm of chamber music, where each player has an independent part which is as important to the whole as is the part of any other of the players. This was completely disregarded on the occasion of a recent broadcast of a string quartet, when the first violin was announced as "principal," both in the official programme and over the air, the names of the other players not even being mentioned. It is to be hoped that in future this will be corrected, since in the eyes of chamber music lovers the distinction is as invidious to the violinist concerned as it is discourteous to the remaining members of the quartet.

CHAMBER MUSIC (Wellington).

FASHIONS AND RATIONS

Sir,—Do these well dressed young men and women about town never sleep or wash? There is no provision in your rationing scheme for sheets, towel, or pillow case—to mention the bare necessities—or is this provision only for the young? All the household necessities no doubt can be obtained from the coupons of the elderly, who, of course, don't need any new clothes. (Dad says he bought his big overcoat just after the last war, and that "there's years of wear in it yet"). So, of course, that's where the necessities for the young business folk are to come from, and tea towels, bed covers, all the not so noticeable extras, will clearly come from Mother's ration book. Everything has been beautifully arranged!—ONE OF THE ELDERLY (Gisborne).

P.S.—How about one sheet or other covering, one towel, one pillowcase from each book?

"Tell me, doctor

. . . Here's the antiseptic you told me to get. Surely it's the same as they used when I was in hospital—when baby was born! Tell me, would it be?"



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