

With Words As Well As With Guns

IT is announced from London, and is very good news if it is true, that Sir Stafford Cripps will in future "concentrate on the all-out development of radio as an offensive weapon for submarine and air warfare." Sir Stafford did notable work during last war in the development of Britain's industrial and scientific offensives, and it is encouraging to think that his great powers will be used in the same way again to-day. However, few laymen know the possibilities of radio in sea and air warfare, and we are only beginning to realise how effectively it can be used on the propaganda front. Until the other day we probably thought that our enemies were well ahead of us in this field, as in most respects they so far have been. But we suggest to-day on Page 8 that this lead has been overtaken, and those who were listening on Sunday night will know why we have been so bold. The radio feature *This Is War*, which began over all the main stations on Sunday and for the next three months will be heard on Sundays at 8 p.m. from Commercial stations and from the National stations at 6.30 p.m. on Mondays, is radio warfare of an intensity not hitherto experienced in New Zealand. It is in fact the kind of thing that most of us will hope we shall never experience again once the present war ends; but in the meantime the war goes on, and it is a tribute to the realism of our American allies that they have decided to fight as relentlessly with words as with bayonets, guns, and bombs. *This Is War* is bold, harsh, and often brutal; crudely emotional, fearlessly sarcastic and hostile. It speaks to Americans, and for Americans, with all the raw bitterness of outraged youth and the menace of insulted power. It is a terrifying, almost a horrible, expression of the wrath of a mighty nation challenged to mortal combat; but war is both terrible and horrible, and we have been too soft so far in our own counsels, and too restrained in our reactions. We are fighting for our lives, and these broadcasts, with all their shocks to taste and manners, will help us to bring the fight to an end in the shortest possible time. In short, they are war.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

OUR MUSIC CRITIC.

Sir.—This is the first request I have ever made to you, and I make it with diffidence. I make it at all because I am sure I speak for very many of your readers — especially that considerable number who, like myself, live by teaching. In any case it is a very modest request—merely this: that whoever is driven from your columns by contractions in space "Marsyas" shall remain. He is precious—by which I mean, of course, but dare not say, priceless. In a fairly long professional career I have never seen so much egotism, uppishness, conscious superiority, and unconscious solemnity packed week by week into three or four hundred words. In spite of his gallant start I felt certain that he would run short of self-admiration after an issue or two; but he is magnificent. He has kept it up for six months. For God's sake, sir, don't stop him now. —NEW EDUCATION (Lower Hutt).

Sir.—How on earth "Marsyas" got past the editor with his (or her) fantastic criticism of *Fantasia* is going to baffle many of your readers for a long time ahead. No man, woman, or child who has actually occupied a seat either as conductor or player in a symphony orchestra would criticise that wonderful synchronisation of music and pictures in the manner adopted by your critic.

Musicians whose names and reputations are household words have been to see and hear this film three and four times. Why? Because the experienced musician realises the beauty and genius combined in such a production. But your critic says that "Stokowski did not understand the music from the outset"! Ignorance hidden behind arrogance is my only answer to such nonsense, and I feel ashamed to think that such a critic should be allowed to use the leading radio journal for such crude stuff. I am a soldier in camp and have used three of my leave nights to witness this great performance.

BAYONET (Christchurch).

OUR FILM REVIEWS

Sir.—I notice that your very excellent film reviewer is taken to task by a correspondent. Why can't he well let alone? Here we have a really good reviewer who has saved us film-goers a lot of money and boring hours by truthfully saying just how good or bad a film is; and someone has to try to get him muzzled so that *The Listener* will get reviews like those in most of the daily papers, who praise everything in case they offend their advertisers.

I hope G.M.'s reviews continue as honest and fearless as in the past. Call a spade a spade and tripe tripe. We sit through too much tripe in the vain endeavour to see something worth seeing. I quite agree, and so I am sure do thousands of others, about his review of *The Chocolate Soldier*: take "The Song of the Flea" out, and the rest was weak and poorly acted, and not worth seeing.—"KEEP GOING (Ohaupo).

Sir.—Your correspondent, L. Waller-Edward, is not on quite the right track when he accuses G.M. of "not reviewing" films. According to the Oxford Diction-

ary a review is, among other things, "a critique of a book or periodical in which . . . new books, etc., are discussed." This, I venture to suggest, is the function G.M. performs. He criticises and discusses the films he sees—from his own point of view, of course: whose else could he take? No opinion can coincide in every mind. What Mr. L. Waller-Edward wants is a laudatory précis of each film. This can be obtained through the advertisement pages of the daily papers. Surely it is refreshing to find G.M.'s honest reviews in *The Listener* week by week, whether or not one agrees with all he says.

N.J.R. (Miramar.)

Sir.—If G.M. handed in the milk-and-water type of review suggested by L. Waller-Edward, "Speaking Candidly" wouldn't survive two issues. G.M.'s ability to feel that something (or lack of it), in a motion picture, and the lucid manner in which he commits his reactions to paper, has stamped him as New Zealand's leading film critic. What are the use of credit titles before a film if we do not criticise the persons named? Women do not visit shops to accept any material which assistants choose to foist upon them; men do not purchase just any shirt or suit; rather they study shades and patterns and formulate their own ideas upon them. Why, therefore, should we accept any film just because Messrs. XYZ says this is a colossal feature with a terrific star? If left to showmen, most of whom always find such good reasons for making money the easiest way, the cinema will continue to be nothing but a glorified sideshow, whereas if its powers are controlled by those artists who have studied and who understand the medium, it can become the greatest force in the cultural and artistic development of mankind.

ROY A. EVANS (Christchurch).

Sir.—Recently my wife and I visited Auckland and saw several cinema programmes. The last we saw was "The Vanishing Virginian," and we both agreed that it was the best we had seen during our visit. Imagine our surprise when we reached home and opened *The Listener* to find that we were mistaken and that the picture was inferior.

Candidly, what was wrong with G.M.? Had he been eating lobster salad or was he just sickening for the flu? If G.M.'s critique of that picture was a criterion of the reliability of his other critiques, the sooner he ceases to pose as a reviewer the better. We shall in future not believe him.

"BACKBLOCKS" (Hokianga).

(It does not surprise us when tastes differ. It surprises us that the difference should be used as an excuse for a rude letter.—Ed.).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"MAVOURNEEN" (Kohou) wants a change from "the sobbing sentimentality of the mewling Vera Lynn", who, he complains, "cracks a man up".

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Pte. E. de L.—No, but perhaps someone else has.—Ed.

F.O. (Wellington): Please send full name and address.