

JANUARY 29, 1943

When Two and Two Are Not Four

WE print to-day an interview with a microbiologist whose social conscience puts questions to the still small voice of science. It is an old problem in the history of science and likely to remain. Even Einstein has plunged once or twice into politics, international and domestic, to the bewilderment of his scientific worshippers. But Dr. Blair is a better politician than Dr. Einstein has shown himself to be. He does not think that two and two invariably make four: for example, that two farmers who like their work and two who don't make four happy men when the day's work is over. He wants to remove the two unhappy ones or to remove the things that make them unhappy, and he suggests that it "will be a big step forward when our agricultural colleges establish departments of rural education." By rural education he means light on rural problems of all kinds, but especially on those that arise out of the fact that the farmer lives and works in cultural isolation. If we grew our potatoes and fattened our lambs on city roof tops there would be no rural problem; but we send men and women and especially children into the wilderness to produce the things that the city consumes, and what worries Dr. Blair is how to make the life of those producers as full and as interesting as most people find the life of the city. It is a fact, confusing and very depressing, that most of the attempts made to improve the educational facilities of the country have had results exactly the opposite of those aimed at. District High Schools, for example, which were established to enable country boys and girls to get a secondary education without going to the city for it, have in fact opened a door through which the brightest of those boys and girls walk out. What Dr. Blair wants to do is to remove the desire to walk out, and it is to be hoped that his conscience is not pricking him uselessly.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

LADIES OR WOMEN?

Sir,—I hope that the correspondent who dislikes the title "For My Lady," has revised her views. I feel that most women, especially hard-working women, will prefer the present title, which allows us to forget for a while our work and hum-drum surroundings. "For My Lady" to me means women working for the war, and all it is being waged for, i.e., beauty of character, traditions of honour that have stood for centuries, loyalty, faith and sweet charity, and receiving no plaudits or even wages; women working beside their ageing husbands, taking the place of sons gone overseas; working far beyond their strength in their declining years, and enjoying the little respite from their work in this brief and satisfying session of another world. Don't call the session "For Women" or "For Housewives." We want to forget for a time that we are housewives. It's not snobbery—it's beauty of the spirit that title stands for. I only want to be a good woman—not a "lady" in a snobbish sense—but with others like myself, I enjoy a little escape from the everyday. "JUST A WOMAN" (Westport).

BRITAIN'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sir,—The professors write to *Nature* to say, in effect, "Down with the Public Schools!" For that is what their demand amounts to. At first blush their demand is impressive. Are they not professors? Yet is not a professor one whose head bulks so much more largely than what supports it? Like an inverted pyramid? But when he falls, like Lucifer—or President Wilson—it is never to rise again.

The professors' demand is one for standardisation of education, for the ease and benefit of post-secondary education—professors, to wit. But standardisation has proved a two-edged weapon even in industry and manufacture. And more dangerous would it be in education, where variety is the spice of life.

Without wearing the old school tie too vigorously, one may confidently declare that the Public Schools integrate the spirit of England far more effectively than does the ukase of a Commissar or the will of any millionaire.

After all, the Public Schools derive from a distant past, when the spirit of service—public, religious or academic—was held high. Whereas the State school stems from the age of the "rights of man." Which makes a difference. (See Bishop Headlan's remarks in your previous issue).

PRIVATE N.Z. (Christchurch).

OUR FILM REVIEWS

Sir,—I wish to confirm all the points raised by G.M. in reply to his critics, particularly John Doe, whose chief interest obviously is not the education or uplifting of the public mind such as fine films—art at its best—can achieve.

The reason for G.M.'s low percentage of first-grade rulings in the last 30 or 40 films he has reviewed is simply the fact that the last year has given us very few first-rate films, and G.M., being an honest critic, is forced to record this fact. His value lies in the fact that his reviews

are his own personal, candid, honest and unbiased opinion; we would not know where we stood if he were to attempt to anticipate what other people may think. As a previous correspondent pointed out, if one wants a good review all the time, one has only to read the theatre advertisements, which pronounce each picture as the best ever.

It is staggering the number of parents who permit their children to go to the pictures every Saturday without first studying the programmes and advising the children where to go. Is it any wonder these children grow up satisfied with anything in film fare? G.M. is doing a public service with his excellent reviews in educating the public towards better taste in films.

I wish to thank him for guiding me to see many excellent films, otherwise unheralded, which I might have let slip but for his recommendation—and for steering me clear of being disappointed with poor films cloaked in the names of some of the screen's best actors, such as Spencer Tracy and Norma Shearer. Also G.M.'s reviews give us entertainment, particularly when a film is a second or third-rate one; then besides serving their purpose, his reviews are cleverly written and make enjoyable reading. His "little man" gradings are excellent.

E. BONIFACE (Palmerston North)

Sir,—A perusal of available papers and magazines satisfies me beyond all doubt that there is one, and only one, film critic in the country, and he is *The Listener* critic. In calibre he ranks with the best of the theatrical critics of other times, and all that John Doe (with his unintelligible American idiom), and his friend say will not alter that fact. Whether one agrees with all, or any, of the reviews by "G.M." is beside the point. He criticises constructively and gives reasons. If there were a hundred like him we would get in this country a much-needed improvement in the standard of pictures.

JANUS (Upper Hutt).

"MORE ABOUT NAMES"

Sir,—May I point out to the writer of "More About Names" in a recent *Listener* that *When Blood is Their Argument* was written by F. S. Oliver, not by Ford Madox Hueffer!

ACCURACY (Auckland).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Taranaki Listener (Waitara) asks for more records of Sidney McEwan's singing which, she says, "must cheer the hearts of many who come from the Old Land."

"Annoyed" (Wellington), wants the ZB stations to close down "at a more earthly hour."

"Interested Listener" (Hawke's Bay), wants more "middle-class" music—particularly Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy—and "a ban on nerve-wracking regimental bands." Never once, she says, has she seen a band asked for in request sessions.

"Musica" (Palmerston North), says that "deception was practised upon unknowing listeners" recently when the programmes said that Arthur Schnabel with the London Philharmonic Orchestra would play Beethoven's G Major Piano Concerto and a Glenside recording was given instead.