

FEBRUARY 5, 1943

## Calling Women

ONE of the features of total war is that it very soon runs short of men. A world war is heavy on men, a world total war so heavy that men alone are not sufficient to keep it going. So the call that is being made this week for more women for the radio-location services is not merely a tribute to the patience and skill of women in this particular field. It is that primarily. But it is also a reminder of the fact that this is a war in which all must serve as well as suffer. No one has ever been foolish enough to suppose that if only men serve only men know what war means in misery. Women are more sensitive than men. They worry more. They suffer more vicariously. Necessarily therefore they endure more in a long and bitter war than all but the limited number of men whose nerves make violence a long agony. Yet it is almost incredible that in a war so long, so wide-spread, so universal, and so deliberately ruthless as this one we are only now beginning to understand in how many ways women can and should serve. Radio-location is a special case because it involves patience as well as precision, and is almost uncannily important. A woman accepted for service in this branch knows that she is not merely relieving men but guarding them, and their wives and their children, with a weapon that gives each watcher the strength of ten. It is radio-location, and a few other mysteries associated with it, that enable us all to go to bed with the confidence of soldiers who trust their sentries. We feel safer behind this scientific screen than behind battleships and forts — provided of course that the guns are there if they are required; and it is women working with men who are keeping us safe. So the moral of course is that those women specially adapted for this work, because they have delicate fingers and sensitive and disciplined minds, must neither hold back nor be selfishly withheld from it by other interests.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## "MRS. MINIVER"

Sir,—Judging by "G.M.'s" former criticisms, I should have imagined (had he dared), he could have pulled the film *Mrs. Miniver* to pieces. It was a poor film, and would only rank as second-feature stuff in England. Its atmosphere was most un-English, and its players intensely American, all acting according to the usual Hollywood stereotyped tradition. The awful precocity of the two children, and the stupid behaviour of the maid, hardly bear thinking about. The only player with any merit or individuality was Dame May Whitty. She gave a splendid performance, typically portraying the old English aristocracy as we know it. May it never die out.—SHALDA FREEMAN (Mairangi Bay).

(Our correspondent may now have read what English critics said of *Mrs. Miniver*.—Ed.).

## VOLUNTARY WORKERS

Sir,—We hear over the air a good deal about the war work done by the various factories in which, it must be remembered, everybody is paid, and paid well. We don't so often hear appreciation of the thousands of voluntary workers, especially women, many of whom are busy housewives. It may be thought that the knowledge of work well and cheerfully done is sufficient reward for those who look for none, but a word or two in acknowledgment would be a grateful gesture.

H.E.H. (Karori).

## "NEVER AGAIN"

Sir,—When I signed myself "Never Again," I had in mind two things, which are really one. Never again a great war (we may have to have policing affairs), and never again a resurgent Germany with the will and capacity to attempt the subjugation of Europe and the world. I brought in Russia simply as a warning to your readers that the British will not be the only architects of the peace terms, and that grievous as have been their sufferings, there are other peoples who have fared worse at the hands of the Germans. We in New Zealand argue about the tiger from a distance. Those others have seen and felt him red in tooth and claw. Peace with Germany? Certainly, on terms. Friendship with Germany? Certainly, on terms. Will "Clemency" tell us what clemency he (or she), proposes to extend, and to whom?

"NEVER AGAIN" (Wellington).

## TELLING CHILDREN.

Sir,—I think that M. R. Kent in her article on "Telling Children about Sex" forgot that body and soul are indistinguishable to the child mind. Perhaps when nine out of 10 children ask where a baby comes from the physical truth is called for but in the tenth it might be cruelty to give it. The soul of a child who looks on his baby brother or sister as something wonderful, angelic, and other-worldly (and there are many) would be starved and even shocked by a physical explanation. Surely the tenth

child is as entitled to his Wordsworthian truth as the other nine are entitled to their physical one.

I should not be happy to lay down the same rules as to how and when sex instruction should be given to different members of my own family, and I should not trust all the child-psychologists, hygienists and educationists in the world to form a safe scheme for schools where the children are of mixed sexes, mixed sects, mixed races, and mixed propensities.

Your correspondent should wait another eight or nine years before advocating expert sex-instruction and then, especially if peace is in the land and economic conditions are fair, she will be charmed and surprised by the crystal-clear minds and sex-normality of Sonia and Iris, while in another 20 years she will be wondering why all this fuss about sex anyway.—OUT OF THE

EVERYWHERE (Dunedin).

Sir,—Some day adults may be rid of their present sex-obsession, and our children be delivered from the awful dangers of being inoculated with it at an early age, by being initiated into Nature's mysteries far too soon. "If only they knew, they'd cease to be curious" most assuredly does not apply to young children with regard to details of sex knowledge. In truth it does not apply to any knowledge. What one does not know, one may wish to know; but what one does know one seeks, if the knowledge is at all attractive, to put into practice. Do these well-meaning fools, who wish to have sex-instruction given promiscuously, altogether fail to realise that they would, if allowed to have their own way, bring into being even more promiscuous experimenters than we have now? All sorts of gruesome ideas were put abroad, a generation or so ago, in the interests of "self and sex," most of them quite fallacious. Nature does not work out too badly if left alone. We "educated" moderns tend to interfere too much, to fuss too much, to worry too much. We trust neither Nature nor God. We imagine that unless we are busy on the job, in every direction, all the time, everything will go to pieces. Commonly, we do more harm than good by our well-meant interferences.—CC (Cambridge).

## YOUTH AT THE CONTROLS

Sir,—One of the worst examples of propaganda programmes needlessly broadcast from Commercial as well as National stations is the link-up for "Youth at the Controls." This session has a very narrow field of interest, and after all, are there many people who cannot obtain reasonable reception of at least one of the National stations? The "Listeners' Request session" is one of the most popular features of the week, and it is ridiculous to interrupt it in this way. I can assure you that the majority of soldiers and airmen in camp greatly prefer a selection of records to "Youth at the Controls," and for the few who do want to hear it, there is always the YA station.

MOVIETOWN (Wellington).