

FEBRUARY 12, 1943

## Germany Mourns

NO one in New Zealand will rejoice because Germany mourns, but everybody will rejoice that Germany has been given reason to mourn. To pretend anything else would be humbug. The harder the United Nations can hit Germany now the sooner all nations will return to the ways of peace. And Stalingrad is a blow almost without precedent in military history. We should not like to join those reckless commentators who are calling it the greatest defeat in all history, which is a little longer than any correspondent's memory or knowledge. But if the victory at Stalingrad had not been greater than any victory German has so far inflicted on the United Nations Hitler would not have ordered three days of mourning. Our own greatest defeat to date was Dunkirk, and from Dunkirk we brought back four-fifths of our army. In other words, we lost all our equipment and, say, 30,000 men. Germany has lost all her equipment in the Stalingrad sector, and 300,000 men. And although it is true that losing all the equipment we had at Dunkirk was very near to losing all we had anywhere (on the ground, and ready for use), Germany is no longer in a position to afford such losses, actually or relatively. We may in fact say that what has happened to their army at Stalingrad is something that the Germany people will remember for centuries; nor will they forget that it was done to them by a nation that they attacked treacherously and set out to crush in a few weeks. But it is one thing to mourn and another thing to surrender. Hitler, who knows his own people, may have achieved something by ordering them into sackcloth and ashes that he could not have achieved in any other way. He may have shaken their morale; but he is just as likely to have united and rallied them, and made them temporarily more formidable. Far more likely. We must not credit them with less courage, physical or moral, than we take for granted ourselves. Above all we must not disgrace ourselves by gloating—or endanger ourselves.

## LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

### CORRECTING THE CORRECTOR.

Sir,—“Always verify your references” is a golden rule. It is a counsel of perfection, and all of us slip now and then. But the rule is particularly incumbent on those who set out to correct others. Your correspondent “Accuracy” corrects me about the authorship of *When Blood is Their Argument*. I said it was by Ford Madox Hueffer. “Accuracy” says it is by F. S. Oliver. I cannot swear that Oliver didn't write a book with this title, but the book I refer to is certainly by Hueffer. I haven't been content to look it up in a catalogue. I have had it in my hand.

A.M. (Wellington).

### THE TEACHING OF HISTORY.

Sir,—In referring to the history paper for the 1942 Entrance Examination “D.H.H.” says that “our universities are still bent on teaching history along narrow nationalistic lines.” I would go further and add that our universities lack diligence in their search for historical accuracy. Take the Napoleonic period. The myth and contradiction woven round those troublous days by partisan writers have no parallel in military history. And as Dryden says: “A falsehood once received from a famed writer becomes traditional to posterity.” Take, for instance, Trafalgar and Waterloo. Our historians, practically without exception, inform us that Trafalgar was a “great and glorious victory,” and stress the fact that the enemy had 33 ships of the line against our 27; but they fail to tell us that in every other single respect the advantages were overwhelmingly in our favour. No mention is made of the fact that the enemy ships were in a deplorable state of inefficiency, many of the Spanish vessels being absolutely unseaworthy and manned by the riff-raff of the maritime towns of the peninsula. The result of the fight was a foregone conclusion, the enemy having about as much chance of winning as the writer would have in a bout of fisticuffs with Joe Louis. Trafalgar was a massacre. Villeneuve and his officers and men knew they were going to certain destruction, but Napoleon's orders had to be obeyed. Then take Waterloo, the importance of which is perhaps the biggest illusion in military history. At Waterloo Napoleon encountered only the advance guard of the allied army, but with the sole exception of Maxwell no other English historian makes that admission. Napoleon's success at Waterloo would have made no difference whatever to the ultimate result of the campaign. Within a week's march of the scene of hostilities 175,000 Russians and 200,000 Austrians were advancing with all speed. We are not told this, but constantly reminded that at Waterloo “the destinies of mankind were trembling in the balance,” and that the “fate of the world depended upon the issues of a moment.” Pretty sentiment, but totally at variance with the truth.

J. A. WALSH (Pahiatua).

### MIXING THE CLASSICS.

Sir,—May I endorse the remarks made by your music critic about the variety nature of 2YC's Saturday evening programmes. These “Symphonic Programmes” on Wednesday evening and the short time allotted to sonata and

chamber music on Friday and Thursday evening respectively used to be the highlights of enjoyment for those who prefer such music. Five hours, in a whole week, is little enough time to give to the classics, from one station, so surely we may again look forward to at least one major work on each of these four evenings. There is certainly a “Variety of Variety” for those who wish it, from many other stations during the week.

I have had so much enjoyment from my radio—in conjunction with *The Listener*—that I like to think I shall continue to have it.

MUSIC LOVER (Lower Hutt).

### KEIR HARDIE.

Sir,—“Blimp” has given himself a most appropriate name. It corresponds with his letter. Who is he to “Damme protest” against what the BBC puts over the air? There are other listeners besides him. I do not know Keir Hardie, or whether he is a dreadful socialist, but it seems to me that what was wanted in those days, but what is sadly lacking, was a bit more of the social spirit, with a good measure of kindly understanding and sympathetic feeling thrown in.

By what I hear Keir Hardie was one of the early heroes who stood up for Labour at a time when it was in need of a champion; when it was being ground to death by capitalists, useless parasites, and hypocrites under the name of religion, with too little of the Christian feeling and an overflow of selfrighteousness and avarice.

Labour to-day is the backbone of the nation and the saviour of civilisation. If Keir Hardie worked for the betterment of the conditions of the working class in the days of poverty and oppression, surely to hear of him cannot pollute the minds of the young of to-day. It is to be hoped the BBC will let us hear more of those early champions.

ELIZABETH A. ROBINSON  
(Marton).

### POINTS FROM LETTERS

“We Three” (Timaru), find the 2YA camp concerts so enjoyable that they want “more if possible.”

V.L. (Auckland) wants “that grand word ‘woman’ once again,” but “*Soldier's Mother*” (Christchurch), finds “for My Lady” a beautiful name, and adds that “the world at present is sadly in need of the uplifting influence of beauty.”

I.M.S. (Auckland), defends the wearing of tinted glasses (1) to protect the eyes from “strong sunlight, dust and wind,” and (2) to “preserve facial expression.”

M.F.G. (Marton), writes a long letter, for which unfortunately we cannot find space, pointing out the “correlation between University Entrance and University Degree” prescriptions in History. An examination of the connection between the two, he argues, “fully justifies” the 1942 paper. “Paddy” (Gisborne), supports the Matriculation History paper (1) because it encourages the study of “present-day historical facts,” and (2) because American servicemen seem to be “well educated in matters which a large proportion of New Zealanders take for granted.”

### ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

“International” (Auckland).—Complaint will be investigated.

“Listener” (Petone).—You are right.

A.H.K. (New Plymouth).—Our sincere thanks.

M. Aylward (Takaka). Referred to Controller, Commercial stations.