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Mr. Churchill

IT seems safe at last to assume that Mr. Churchill is almost well again and reckless to say more than that. He is sixty-eight years old; he has lived an exhausting life; for four years he has carried a load that would have oppressed any man in his vigorous youth; for four months he had almost the whole future of civilisation on his shoulders; three weeks ago he returned from a flight of ten thousand miles; and—we know it now—he has had pneumonia. We can therefore feel easy about him only if we go on taking it for granted that his body is as tough as his mind. So far it has been. Till the war is won we must go on hoping that it will be. But it is neither reasonable nor intelligent nor kind to forget what he has already endured. Strong as he is, he can be broken; worshipped though he is by millions—dangerously, since no man is proof against that—he can be confused by incessant and exasperated by senseless carping until his very strength brings him down. Once only in recent history has a man so old been able to save his nation and the world; and he was a man so cynical and hard that criticism scarcely touched him. Criticism there must be if self-government is to survive; but it should be responsible and informed, and never while the battle lasts should its aim be to breed mistrust. It is after all not very difficult in normal times to find a leader who deserves a fall. For those who delight in such "sport" game are plentiful in every democracy and the hounds always ready. But if we have not learnt yet when to leave the hounds chained we deserve to lose the war; and that is another way of saying that we shall ourselves wear the collars and drag the chains.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THE SALUTE

Sir,—I have known for years that there was something wrong with our British salute, but until last night I did not know what. Here is the secret—revealed by William Forbes-Mitchell, late Sergeant, Ninety-third Sutherland Highlanders, in his *Reminiscences of the Great Mutiny*:

"Among several candidates brought by the head-man was a fine-looking old man, who gave me an unmistakable military salute in the old style. Square from the shoulder—quite different from the present mongrel German salute, which the English army has taken to imitating since the Germans beat their old conquerors, the French; I mean the present mode of saluting with the palm of the hand turned to the front."

SALAAM (Wellington).

KEIR HARDIE

Sir,—The protest of "Blimp" in your issue of the 22nd inst. prompted me to wish to associate myself with the BBC in paying a tribute to "that dreadful Socialist Keir Hardie." I was neither a follower nor an admirer of some of his methods. But I met him one day, and the contact changed my opinion of the man completely. I had occasion to visit the House of Commons one day to see a certain member. He was waiting to catch the Speaker's eye, but sent Keir Hardie to see me. As it turned out, I was glad this happened. Keir Hardie not only took endless trouble to do what I wanted, but did it in such a beautiful way, that I wondered if I was doing him the favour. I might be able to pay "Blimp" a similar tribute if I knew him.
W. TRAFFORD (Bay View).

Sir.—Damme, sir, I'm mortified, cast down and repentant. Never again will I use the weapon of sarcasm. When, in my original letter I took the pen-name of "Blimp," and when I referred to "heresy-hunters" and that "dreadful Socialist Keir Hardie" (in admiration for whom I actually yield to nobody), I thought I was making the leg-pull so obvious that no one could mistake it. But it seems that there are still some good, innocent people in the world, and I'd like to apologise if I have unintentionally caused them some distress. So, for the last time, I sign myself

BLIMP (Wellington).

AID FOR AMATEURS

Sir,—After hearing a talk on the Halle Orchestra this morning, I feel that it might interest listeners to know of an activity of that orchestra which is not, as far as I know, shared by other great English orchestras, and which might usefully be followed by the NBS Orchestra here. When any local amateur choral and orchestral society is performing some great work, it usually gets for the final-rehearsal and the public performance either the whole or parts of the Halle Orchestra to help it. In this way, the performance is far better than the amateurs alone could give, and, even more important, the local amateurs have the opportunity of playing and singing with great professional musicians and so improving their own standards. I remember particularly a performance of Vaughan Williams's "Sea Symphony,"

given in this way, and at the same concert Dame Ethel Smyth conducted some of her own work also.—MARY R. LARKAS (Thames).

"RECENT MUSIC"

Sir,—Your column "Recent Music" is misnamed. Two recent weeks have been devoted, almost entirely, to one innocuous programme recorded and presented from a B station, and your commentator devotes all this space to tell us that this particular programme was not a well-balanced one. This statement is hidden in a mass of verbal floundering with borrowed quotations, and is supported by a series of entirely unoriginal arguments (see any book on "Musical Appreciation"). In any case, why all the hullabaloo? This programme was obviously devised for those who do not take their music too seriously and who can still enjoy a pretty tune. Even Bach and Haydn had their lighter moments.

I would also like to deprecate your columnist's habit of quoting little known composers i.e., Huba, Varese, and such like. Since he cannot have heard any works by these folk, and it is unlikely that New Zealand listeners will ever do so, their inclusion is a form of ostentation and, as such, is to be deprecated.
A.W.T. (Christchurch).

TEACHING HISTORY

Sir,—If Mr. Walsh's letter in your issue of 12/2/43 means anything, it indicates that in his view Britons should be ashamed of themselves for winning, or claiming as victories, the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo, having taken a mean advantage of their poorly prepared opponents, and that our Universities have badly failed in not having sufficiently emphasised such national wrong-doings. Each to his taste, of course, but I had thought that at least some teachers had done their best to do so, and belittle their own nation's great achievements.
A.G.B. (Thames).

[R. White (late 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards), writes to say that having read Maxwell's History, he "has failed to find therein that Russia and Austria were England's allies, or that they were advancing with all speed to the assistance of the English at Waterloo." He also encloses Maxwell's account of the Battle of Waterloo, which we have not the space to reprint.—Ed.]

HATE AND HATS

Sir,—I wonder if the writer to whom "Clemency" refers realises that this legacy of hate is propagated by the skillful organisers of competitive industry. Maybe when there is a Beveridge Plan for every nation, and competitive industry is not the dominant factor, we shall merge into peace almost without knowing, and our hatreds will die for want of attention. The competitive industry which exploited Mrs. Miniver's vanity, and caused her to hand over three notes for a hat which must have cost not more than five shillings to manufacture—is an example. But even hats can engender enmity (among women), and make a contribution to this legacy of hate to which "Clemency" refers. Women would look better without hats anyway.—LYDIA (Wellington).

[Readers will be interested to learn that "Mrs. Miniver's" hat is reported to have been sold at auction for £15,300, for war purposes.—Ed.]

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