

Men in Ships

THE fact that this is Navy Week in the Loan campaign means that our efforts to raise money for the prosecution of the war are tied up for seven days with the exploits of men in ships. Here and here the navy helped us; how much can we help in return? But it is also an opportunity to remember the thousands of men in ships whom it is easy to forget but without whom we could not fight for a week. It would not be correct, or nearly correct, to say that when we talk about the navy we forget the merchant marine, and that when the merchant marine comes to our minds we think chiefly of officers and engineers and wireless operators and seldom of firemen and greasers and stewards and deck-hands. We do not forget those others, but if we are not careful we remember them much as we remember the sap in the wood when we hang over a full-blown rose. Their work is vital, but it is secondary, hidden, and often silent, and it is human nature to applaud the spectacular. Fortunately, this will probably be the last war in which the navy and the merchant marine will remain two services. Even the admirals are ashamed of the line so often drawn between the ratings on a war-ship and the crew of a tramp or tanker—a line that makes heroes of one, with their own hospitals and pensions, and an “also served” host of the others from youth to age and from the fo’c’s’le to the Old Men’s Home. No one has spoken more hotly against this than Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, a recent Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, who has said on public platforms and from his place in the Lords that he has felt dishonoured and disgraced to see merchant seamen rescued by the navy and taken to port wondering where to go for shelter and hospital treatment and not eligible for admission to the hospitals and barracks of their saviours. It is not the navy’s fault, and it is not wholly the fault of any Government; but it must disappear. Meanwhile let us keep all these unsung warriors as safe as our pockets and bank accounts can make them this week.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MR. COATES

Sir,—May I congratulate you on your admirable leader on Mr. Coates. His outstanding qualities of manhood and his superiority to the petty and the personal in his public actions were recognised in a way that appealed to all, whether supporters or opponents of his politics.

You then wisely chose to leave the estimate of his place in history to history, which always makes it irrespective of the “way in which it strikes a contemporary.” There was in this a dignity and a respect for the reader which I, for one, appreciate.

F. L. COMBS (Wellington).

MUSIC OR HUMOUR?

Sir,—In answer to J. Douglas, of Masterton, who complains of too much classical music, I should like to say that if he likes lowbrow entertainment, he has the choice of listening to any of the commercial stations, or to most of the national stations. In fact, as far as I can see, never more than two of the main stations give good music on the same night. I also am at work all day, and consequently cannot “sit round the radio all day.” We who like good music, on the contrary, have a very small choice of stations from which to listen, and most of them are sub-stations.

P. M. H. de LACEY (Timaru).

PROGRAMME APPRECIATED

Sir,—With the skirl of the pipes still echoing in our ears, and the pleasing tones of those Scottish voices, may we send you a psalm of praise and expressions of deep gratitude for the programme by the Invercargill Caledonian Band from 4YZ to-night (May 17).

Seated around this fireside were a very English Englishman, some young New Zealanders, and an exile from Scotia, an ex-member of the Black Watch. All offer sincere thanks to those responsible for arranging and presenting this most enjoyable programme—also that of May 7, “Calling Invercargill,” the broadcast from Monkton Parish, Ayr.

Had television enabled us to see Pipe-Major R. C. Sutherland and his pipes, why, then, our pleasure would have been complete. We thank you most appreciatively.

“LONACH” (Otago Central).

UGHT AND NOUGHT

Sir,—The circular symbol representing zero or cipher is used by the BBC and others in its own right. It is not a letter purloined from the alphabet. The Roman way of writing numerals, which is still much used by us, was the first method used in Britain, but for reckoning, an abacus was used. The cipher 0 ranks as one of the most useful of inventions, for it enables us to do without the ruled columns of the abacus. The inventor could have made the symbol some other shape for his purpose!

Our present system of numerals with the symbol 0 complete is of Indian origin, introduced into England about the 16th century. In time “naught” became synonymous with cipher. And

the borrowed letter O sound to express the cipher when spacing our Babylonian notation of time is a very sensible one in broadcasting. It is more euphonious than “naught,” also easier for broadcasters to say and for listeners to “pick up”; more important still, it can be universally understood. I admit that the London method of using it sounds better than the present New Zealand method.

ACKEMMA (Kaitiaki).

EARLY SWING

Sir,—I do not pretend to know much about swing, but I think I have discovered an earlier example than “The music goes round and round”—the chorus of the tune written for Lewis Carroll’s poem in *Alice in Wonderland*, where the Duchess sings to her baby to “Speak roughly to your little boy.” As I said before, I don’t know much about it, and would be glad to know whether I am right.

“THE DUCHESS” (Kelburn).

HUMOUR PLEASE

Sir,—Your correspondent Jim Douglas is put out because of the lack of humour in the programmes. In that respect he may be almost correct, but when he calls Mozart’s 25th Symphony (which he has never heard, owing to the fact that only Symphonies 28 to 41 have been recorded), a dirge, I think that all classically-minded people should protest. Furthermore, I expect that working on the land could be quite well described as war working, and I must say that any other so-called “high-brows” of my acquaintance get no time to sit round the radio all day while the modest real workers are on their job. I was inspired by a recording of Mozart’s 34th Symphony from Station 1ZM.—HERB (Timaru).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

G.C. (Campbell’s Bay) wants operas without commentary. “I have hitherto,” he writes, “regarded myself as a lover of operas. I now find I am too much irritated by the commentary ever to be able to hear one right through. . . . It would interest me greatly to hear other listeners’ views.”

“Far North” (Omana), supports another correspondent’s protest “against the frequent link-up of New Zealand stations for broadcasts which are not of vital importance.” He adds that “many of the 15-minute war bulletins could be expressed more intelligibly in two or three minutes.”

Tom Mills (Feilding), wants to know why *The Listener* “does not give grown-ups an intimation of special children’s programmes,” and why Aunt Molly does not make a bigger noise in advance about such an outstanding programme as she put on during the Children’s session on Tuesday, May 25.

“Dumb” and “Cluck” (Wellington), “Two unfortunate young people living in a flat controlled by a strict landlady,” find the musical interludes in recorded plays “a constant source of anxiety.” They want to know if this music, which they agree adds colour to the drama, could not be broadcast at the same level as the dialogue.

“Erk” (Ohakea), writes to express his enthusiastic appreciation of the Rainbow Rhythm programme put over 2YA.

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

“Disgusted”: So are we. But the matter is beyond our control. The programmes are correct as we print them when we print them. Last-minute changes are announced over the air.

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