

JULY 16, 1943

Call To Greatness

ONE of the few American editors whom New Zealanders know by name, Herbert Agar of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, wrote a book some weeks ago which he called *A Time for Greatness*. It was an appeal to the English-speaking world to rouse itself from its "progressive inability to take anything seriously." And if that was a good appeal in February it is many times better in July. To-morrow, any day, fighting such as the world has never known before may flare up on half a dozen fronts. The United Nations are strong. Dispersed over the whole world they have more strength than the enemy has ever had or now can build up. But the enemy has strength where it is most needed this month of July, 1943; enormous strength; and we deceive ourselves if we think that the odds will be heavily on our side anywhere before Christmas. We are opening one of the decisive battles of history with no certain margin anywhere but in the moral support of mankind; and we must prove ourselves worthy of that support. We must be strong enough to take what comes; big enough to avoid recriminations when plans miscarry — as some plans will. We must not ask, or slip into the sullen moods in which we think of asking, whose army, whose navy, whose munition workers or railwayman or miners are slacking while we sweat. We are in short called to greatness, and to win we must listen. And listening means getting rid of slackness, of pettiness, of cowardice, and of sloth; getting rid of what Agar calls the "occupational disease of low politics" that makes democracies ashamed to be great; rising above the outmoded idea that war is a game; getting something into the vacuous space of the disendowed heart, and keeping it there. To regard the war as a blessing in disguise is blasphemy. But to think, because we deserve some of its pains, that we cannot fight our way out of them is cowardice on top of blasphemy—and that fight is now on. To win we must deserve to win.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

APPEAL TO WOMEN

Sir,—Your description of the appeal made by the leaders of the Church to the women of New Zealand as "pathetic" was apt. It was pathetic because it ignored the fact that the looseness it deplored is not a thing isolated in itself, but is an essential part of the world chaos in which we find ourselves. War and sexual promiscuity are complementary results of an attitude of mind which places national and financial interests above the interests of individual human beings. To close one's eyes to the attitude of mind which causes such results, and then to deplore one while openly or tacitly condoning the other, is surely so irrational as to be "pathetic." They are twin fruit of the same rotten tree, and while the tree stands, the fruit will be tainted. When women see the Church fighting without fear and without ceasing against all the greed in high places, all the woolly and emotional thinking, all the selfishness and lust for power that lead to war, then an appeal to them from it may carry some weight. At present, it carries little, or none at all.—"SAPPHO" (Ngunguru).

Sir,—As a veteran of two wars, I was interested in the letter by your correspondent "Audax II," especially his remark that "In normal times most people have the expectation that they will live long enough to satisfy it" (their sex-appetite). Then he goes on to say "but these are not normal times."

From The Boys Overseas

THE time devoted to messages and talks from New Zealanders overseas has now been extended to enable the increasing number of editions to be broadcast. There are four new programmes in the week, of which two are for additional talks, and two for messages. The times and the substance of the new sessions, are as follow:
 Sunday, 8.0 a.m.: Greetings from New Zealand troops in the Pacific.
 Monday, 6.30 p.m.: Talks from the Middle East and Pacific.
 Wednesday, 6.30 p.m.: Talks from the Middle East and Pacific.
 Wednesday, 10.30 p.m.: Repetition of greetings from the Pacific.

As a soldier who has seen much active service, this is a new one on me. To suggest that those who live dangerously think they must crowd all this kind of thing into their lives at every opportunity is nonsense. How little he knows the mind of the average soldier. Perhaps the war would never have been started if the Germans had not thought that the ideals and ideas of "Audax II." were the British ones in general.

AUDACIOUS XX. (Carterton).

Sir,—Your correspondent "Audax II" says (in effect), that "life" is sensual (i.e. sexual) indulgence, and fidelity (in man or woman), is just biding one's time. Does he also think that priests and nuns sooner or later break their vows, and that the curate who has to wait too long for a better living steals the bishop's spoons? It would be no more beastly to

think such things than to suppose that the last thought of the young pilot as he crashes to earth is the women he has missed. Let me tell him (as the lucky, or unlucky, survivor of 12 pilots who left New Zealand more than three years ago), that his conception of a "young AIR FORCE man" is as near to the reality as is the conduct of the dogs in the street to the conduct of the men and women who pass them by.—"PER ARDUA AD ASTRA" (Eastbourne).

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Sir,—I listened to the special Independence Day programme with mixed feeling. Obviously a great deal of thought had been put into its preparation, but it doesn't take much thought to decide who most typically portrays the independent spirit of U.S.A. You may say Roosevelt, MacArthur or perhaps Charlie Chaplin, but I think Paul Robeson takes first place, and surely that spirit is perfectly expressed in his rendering of "Ballad for Americans," a recording which is heard too infrequently in New Zealand. I suggest that this recording, backed by a commentary to bring in the local colour, would have been simpler than the elaborately prepared programme just ended.

M. S. SUTCH (Blenheim).

GARIBALDI'S CURSE

Sir,—Your recent article about Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily brings to mind an interesting statement made by this famous Italian soldier. "England," he said, "is a great and powerful nation, foremost in human progress, enemy to despotism, the only safe refuge for the exile, friend of the oppressed, and if ever England should be so circumstanced as to require the help of an ally, cursed be the Italian who would not step forward in her defence."

Commenting on this statement early in the war, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary for Air, said: "As a liberal, and a lover and admirer of Italy, I am not sorry to see Signor Mussolini, the savage persecutor of Italian liberals, the assassin of Matteotti, the treacherous conqueror of Abyssinia, the brutal oppressor of the Arabs in Libya, the cowardly jackal of Europe, marching to destruction with the curse of Garibaldi on his head." Since this observation was made, Mussolini has come a great deal nearer to destruction. It is also interesting to note that "free-Italians" in England have formed a Garibaldi regiment.

H.M.T. (Auckland).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"Popeye" (Christchurch), wants to know why men in the "Senior Service" get the lowest rates of pay. Although they are all volunteers, he says, they do not get enough to enable them to see round when they are on leave in other countries, or to save against the day of their discharge in their own country. "I can see a number of voters, especially the young women, turning in the opposite direction at the coming election unless these men in the navy are paid enough to enable them to marry when they come home."

"Variety" (Lower Hutt), "apologises for mentioning it," but thinks "it would be lovely" if National and Commercial stations broke all their "Chocolate Soldier" records and did not replace them for at least six months. "I agree that there are worse records, and that these are tuneless, but we would appreciate the soldier so much more if we didn't have to associate him with washing up the breakfast dishes almost every morning."

Will the author of the "Shop Talk" Simple Story in our issue of June 4 please send name and address?

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