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SIXPENCE

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PARLIAMENT AND THE WAR

THE critical debate that ended with an oratorical triumph for the Prime Minister marks the conclusion of a well-defined stage in this war. A year ago, after the Norwegian fiasco, this coalition government was formed. Its first impetus carried us through the crisis of last summer; it put the country at least partly on a war footing and under its leadership the R.A.F. was able to defeat the German attack in the autumn. But it promised far more. The recent disasters, which are so unpleasantly parallel to those of last spring, are in part at least due to its predominantly nationalistic and imperialistic outlook. It failed to make this a "people's war" (with unmistakable results on production); the Socialist changes necessary for a state of siege and necessary to-day in peace and in war were not attempted; its whole war strategy has been bedevilled by its efforts to make friends of dictators like Franco and out-of-date Conservative forces like the Arab landlords. Its refusal of India's offer of co-operation has made nonsense of its plea to be fighting for "democracy," with unfortunate effects in the United States. Mr. Churchill made a very fine speech indeed; but he gave this country no dynamic to place against Hitler's confident assertion of mastery in Europe. And he did not discuss the extraordinary position of this island between the two greater industrial Powers of Germany and America.

On the immediate questions of the war the debate left a disturbing impression of indifferent capacity and tactical optimism: we await the figures that measure our losses in the Atlantic Battle with anxiety. But

question: "Shall we now flinch and permit these munitions to be sunk in the Atlantic Ocean?" While he spoke, the State Legislature of Texas gave the answer of the South, in a vote of 100 to 15 in favour of the escort of transatlantic convoys by American warships. The Southern States are more nearly unanimous in this matter than the rest of the country. We must prepare ourselves for stubborn opposition and perhaps for delay, but we can no longer doubt that the administration is ready to lead in a great step forward for which the majority of Americans are at length morally prepared. It is reasonable to hope that within a week or two the United States will become, in the words of the President of Harvard, "a naval belligerent." Nothing less will serve; we note the tactics that Hitler is likely to pursue in the Atlantic. We must expect him to continue his concentrated attack on the western ports of England and Scotland and then to tighten his hold, before any invasion is prepared, by making such islands as Cape Verde, the Canaries and the Azores into German bases. Need Britain leave it to Hitler to be first in these islands?

While this good news from across the Atlantic transforms for us the distant prospect, we must face with honest realism the disturbing prospect that faces us in the Middle East. We may draw some encouragement from local successes round Tobruk and elsewhere in Libya, while in Abyssinia the final liquidation of the Italian armies cannot be much longer delayed. With the veterans from Greece and East Africa we should now have men enough in Egypt for the defence of

on the job. *Plant and Phantom*, though lacking nothing in journalistic dash, makes an altogether stronger impression. He is still the brilliant reporter—witness this account of Dublin:

With her seedy elegance,
With her gentle veils of rain,
And all her ghosts that walk
And all that hide behind
Her Regency façades—
The catcalls and the pain,
The glamour of her squalor,
The bravado of her talk.
The lights jig in the river
With a concertina movement,
And the sun comes up in the morning
Like barley-sugar on the water
And the mist on the Wicklow hills
Is close, as close
As the peasantry were to the landlord. . . .

Much of his verse gives the sensation of mood, of place, of being here and nowhere else—London, Ireland or America provides the scene; and wherever he goes he seems to slip in like a hand into glove, with as much lightness and assurance. His is essentially a light verse (the phrase shouldn't be restricted to the facetious genre), and everywhere this lightness is matched by gaiety of detail and image. "The lights jig in the river With a concertina movement" is carelessly, exactly right in its place. Whatever the theme or its implications, just so much emphasis is given as is needed. In the section called "The Coming of War," for example, there is a poem "Galway" which begins with these stanzas:

O the crossbones of Galway,
The hollow grey houses,
The rubbish and sewage,
The grass-grown pier,
And the dredger grumbling
All night in the harbour;
The war came down on us here.
Salmon in the Corrib
Gently swaying
And the water combed out
Over the weir
And a hundred swans
Dreaming on the harbour:
The war came down on us here. . . .

There, nothing is underlined, and yet everything is adequate. Probably more bad verse is written through wanting to feel too much than through feeling too little. In nearly all the poems of *Plant and Phantom*, even the sketches, feeling and expression have the same cool, curious lift.

Several of the poems have the general title "Novelettes." "Order to View," though not among them, shows how much Mr. MacNeice's art has in common with the short story; it is admirable in itself, but one looks for a parallel in prose—Turgenev, perhaps.

It was a big house bleak;
Grass on the drive;
We had been there before
But memory, weak in front of
A blistered door, could find
Nothing alive now;
The shrubbery dripped, a crypt
Of leafmould dreams; a tarnished
Arrow over an empty stable
Shifted a little in the almost void.
And wishes were unable
To rise; on the garden wall
The pear-trees had come loose
From rotten loops; one wish,
A rainbow bubble, rose,
Faltered, broke in the dull
Air—what was the use?
The bell-pull would not pull
And the whole place, one might
Have supposed, was deadly ill:
The world was closed.
And remained closed until

Defiance. 'Near at hand
Somewhere in a loose-box
A horse neighed
And all the curtains flew out of
The windows; the world was open.

Within this light key Mr. MacNeice can play a number of tunes: a jazzy lyric on the talkers in a café, lyrics with sex or nostalgia or war-menace or country quiet as the theme. He never overstates; he never lets his mood curdle. That, in these days, is something of an achievement. G. W. STONIER

The Gestapo Defied. By MARTIN NIEMÖLLER.
Hodge. 6s.

The title of this book must not be misinterpreted. Pastor Niemöller has confined his message strictly to the field of religion. He is hardly less severe on bourgeois democracy and Russian Communism than on Nazism. The world in which we live, he says, no longer knows God, though it proclaims God when this seems expedient. Niemöller, we believe, never professed himself a pacifist, and yet, read to-day, the similarity between his preaching and that of Christian pacifism is remarkable. In the sermon "Hearing v. Doing," he writes of the possibility of fighting on the right side, without seeing that we are not fighting because of the love of God for men and women, but because of human or moral indignation against those who offend our sacred conviction. In that case, he maintains, we are fighting for our own hand; we may end by losing our faith in our fight for faith. The translation is excellent. Pastor Niemöller's language is simple but extraordinarily powerful. He loves the parables of the New Testament, and his sermons are full of strong and moving elucidations of them. These sermons are not the work of a comprehensive mind. But their language is memorable, their faith clear, and their courage unshakeable.

Week-end Competitions

No. 588

Set by Raymond Mortimer.

A first prize of Two Guineas and a second prize of Half a Guinea are offered for the best laudatory epigram, in not more than 12 lines, commemorating the centenary of the London Library.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, May 19th.
2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 585
Set by G. W. Stonier

Mr. A. P. Herbert's verse postscript of last Sunday might be followed by invitations to poets to broadcast on the situation. The usual prizes are offered for the best extract from a poem (limit 24 lines) that might be written in the circumstances by one of the following: T. S. Eliot, John Betjeman, John Masefield, Patience Strong, Dylan Thomas, Robert W. Service, Cole Porter, or Stephen Spender.

Report by G. W. Stonier

There are few things more exhilarating than good parody, few flatter than imitation. Between the two come various degrees of effervescence. Competitors provided all kinds, except perhaps the very best. On the whole they were slapdash and amusing with Eliot; baffled by Betjeman; out of touch (forgivably!) with Masefield; stimulated by Cole Porter. Robert W. Service and Patience Strong each offered a genre which in the second case was not difficult to improve on. Most of the Spenders were rather feeble, the Dylan Thomases surprisingly

S
O
S
...



my lovely
BRAEMAR
undies are
wearing out!

So what do you do? Boo-hoo about the war and the fact that everything lovely is hard to replace? No, you get busy and send them (through your retailer) to the Braemar 'Stitch-in-Time' Service—which will repair fraying, re-shape after faulty washing—or whatever you want. This applies to your Braemar knitwear as well. Ask your Braemar retailer about this important new economy idea, or write to address below for booklet giving full details.

SEND THEM TO THE



THROUGH YOUR RETAILER

SAVES MEN'S THINGS, TOO! Send your hus-

Blare like a blot; are conducted along tight wires my
 Straight larynx and your uncurled whorled ear.
 You are trees in hushed forests, and turned flat to me,
 Palms for gift, the myriad of green ears. . . .
 (D. W. Barker)

From a Betjeman glimpse of after-the-war :
 . . . And we shall have Osram in bathroom and hall
 When the bombs fall no longer or fail to explode,
 There'll be chocolates and onions and freedom for all
 And the lime trees will flower in Victory Road.
 (Jennifer Wayne)

War can add few terrors, though a certain topicality, to the utterances of Dylan Thomas :
 Bone of my bone the man from Africa
 Who wraps his rations in to-morrow's news
 Drives his lost legions down the rib of sea;
 Fleshed with my flesh the Trojan gentlemen
 With Boney's phantom in the hobbyhorse
 Paw the Greek gates, my bone, my bastion.
 On seas of glass the melancholy oils
 Mark the drowned ships. Golden Cwmbrwn-lais sees
 Walking straw-hipped the military girls;
 The summer boys that kissed the usher's ferrule
 Now, blanco-bright snip at their captains' hairs;
 Under Olympus flowers my father's coral.
 (PAMELA HANSFORD JOHNSON)

Mr. Eliot on the Food Situation :
 And when all this is done,
 When the soil has been ploughed,
 The mothers-in-law, and uncles and aunts,
 The husbands and wives and children
 Have bent to their piece of earth,
 Ferocious and feline,
 Have been poking the peevish and intractable ground . . .
 When all this is done,
 And the potatoes, tomatoes, peas, beans, and onions,
 The celery and lettuce, the rhubarb, the spinach etcetera,
 And the golden fruit have been gathered and stored ;
 Then the Axis' edge will be blunt,
 And it will have been worth while, after all. . . .
 (H. W. Unna)

Extract from a "Versical Postscript by Robert W. Service":
 I ain't much of a fellow, I'm a bit of a rolling-stone,
 I've wasted my life in useless strife and lived for myself alone.
 I've been to the other end of the world on the trail for the muck called gold,
 I've had cards and whisky and women and wandered far from the fold;
 But I've got a hunch what justice is, what honour and Empire mean,
 And I've worked my passage to England to fight for the cause that is clean. . . .
 (F. R. Davies, Ptc. 97003493)

Patience Strong (this sort of thing might appeal to one of our more highbrow impresarios of revue) :
 A lovesome thing is Listening. We listen to the Songs of Spring and when at break of day we wake, our drowsy Ears prepare to take swift note of each delightful Sound, that wafts its echoes all around; the Music of a well-loved voice makes ev'ry listening Heart rejoice, and homely Sounds we joy to hear, the tea-bell and proud Chanticleer. And now with folded wings my Muse has listened to the evening News, and adds thereto her own P.S., a tender touch of Happiness; what though the News is grim to-night, we'll keep all lovely Things in sight. . . . (Nancy Gunter)

In awarding the prizes I found it difficult to decide between two Eliots and two Dylan Thomases. H.R. comes first with a brilliantly funny Eliot; his title, his cautious and admonitory phrases are closer than any other parody I have seen to the original. Between John Mair and Pamela Hansford Johnson it was almost a toss-up. Both are diabolically accurate in their touch, but the former just wins by being more within the terms of the competition, and is awarded the Second Prize.

FIRST PRIZE

CHARD WHITLOW. By T. S. Eliot
 As we get older we do not get any younger.
 Seasons return, and to-day I am fifty-five,
 And this time last year I was fifty-four;
 And this time next year I shall be sixty-two.
 And I cannot say I should like (to speak for myself)
 To see my time over again—if you can call it time:
 Fidgeting uneasily under a draughty stair,

Or counting sleepless nights in the crowded tube.
 There are certain precautions—though none of them very reliable—
 Against the blast from bombs and the flying splinter,
 But not against the blast from heaven, *vento dai venti*,
 The wind within a wind unable to speak for wind;
 And the frigid burnings of purgatory will not be touched.
 By any emollient.
 I think you will find this put,
 Better than I could ever hope to express it, In the words of Khama: "It is, we believe, Idle to hope that the simple stirrup-pump Will extinguish hell."
 Oh, listeners,
 And you especially who have turned off the wireless,
 And sit in Stoke or Basingstoke listening appreciatively to the silence,
 (Which is also the silence of hell) pray, not for your skins, but your souls.
 And pray for me also under the draughty stair, As we get older we do not get any younger,
 And pray for Khama under the holy mountain. (H. R.)

SECOND PRIZE

Especially when the wagging microphone, Telling the world's news and the jackal's weather,
 Breaks woman's circle, tweaks the stilted feather,
 Shows Siegfried's sucking at the dugs of war Dabbling in blood, his milk.
 Especially when the after-dinner bomb Is Caesar's midwife to the womb of town,
 When mansead curdles, and the jointed loin Forgets the neural itch; the April fever Melts to a knocking fear.
 What can the nerve's mouth, the stomach's rumour,
 What can the boneless tongue, the heart's murmur,
 As through the veins of wire the shambling tank Gropes in a metal anger, the bull's finger Probing the harnessed rumour?
 Particularly, then, should I be dumb,
 Let speech be cordite, words the climbing worm
 Waiting a better summer. (John Mair)

A short course of Five Lectures on "DELINQUENCY" for Probation Officers, Social Workers and others interested in work with children, will take place at the Tavistock Clinic, Kidderpore Avenue, Hampstead, N.W.3, beginning Friday, May 16th, at 5.30 p.m. The fee for the course is 7/6. Detailed syllabus and tickets obtainable in advance from the Educational Secretary at the Clinic.

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BOOKS WANTED

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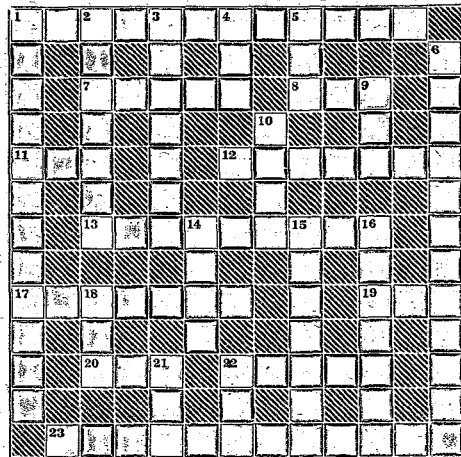
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WEEK-END CROSSWORD 31 Set by V. S.



2. A certain polish about the man makes him dated. (7)
3. Hospital Direction. (7)
4. See 5.
5. Abandon in the street. (6)
6. Bob up Ireland-d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d! (12)
7. rev. & 8 rev. Stop the train, old man. (6)
10. You need several coupons to get a look-in. (4)
14. Warm? It's about zero! (4)
15. Trunk call. (7)
16. rev. Does he attend the High School? (7)
- 18 & 20. The witch on her broomstick is richelish in Scotland. (6)
- 21 & 11. It's one of the teens. (6)
22. No gentleman commemorates the Christian century. (3)

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

T P E R J U R I E S M
 A O N S I A
 L O L L T R A K C A J
 K A T E B E R O
 I K N E S S E R
 N E T T L A A
 G O P H E R C A R M E N
 T O R B T L D
 U E N O I S E A M
 R T S S D I I

The last week's winner is:

N. Johnson, 88 Orme Road, Bangor.

- ACROSS 13. Petty, perhaps, 22. "Our Mutual Friend" by Gumm!
 1. Man the boats as the accountant's poultry ex- (5)
 fore and aft. (12)