

BALLERINAS IN THE BUD

IN a breathing
space between
two dances,
The Listener

interviewed Miss Kathleen Daintree, Royal Academy examiner from London for New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa. She was in the middle of an examination, so we waited our turn in a flutter of anxious mothers and quivering young ballerinas on the stairs outside.

"I should really be in London," Miss Daintree explained to us when she found a moment to talk. "I came out to examine three years ago, and it's not the policy of the Royal Academy to leave an examiner in any country for more than one examination. We lose touch with the latest developments in London if we are too long away. Besides, it is better for your country to have different examiners, for it keeps you, too, more closely linked. But when it was time for me to go home, the Japanese came into the war so of course, here I am."

We were interested to know whether wartime London had kept on dancing or whether ballets for Britain had been entirely superseded by bombing.

"Strangely, or perhaps not so strangely, there has been a great revival of dancing in Britain," explained Miss Daintree. "There has been more interest in Royal Academy examinations than ever before. It is simply marvellous. There were as many as 7000 entries for children this year. But it's the same right through the field of dancing. The Vic-Wells ballet has presented some of its greatest works since the war began, and the number of really fine dancers among its members can compare with anything in pre-war days."

"Is the ballet the aim of every operatic student?" we asked.

"Well, the Royal Academy is interested principally in ballet, and we feel that we can further the interest of the students in ballet by furthering the technique of their dancing. That is one reason why we hold these examinations. If a pupil has good technique, then she is a much more possible candidate for the ballet. One obstacle is the expense of the training, but since the war started, Lord Leverhulme has granted two scholarships of £150 to help the most promising students."

"But even if they can't all be ballerinas, their training is not lost?"

"No," said Miss Daintree. "A course of dancing lessons has a very definite educational value. It gives the children poise. It stimulates them and makes them mentally alert. It gives them ideas of colour, dress, and balance. National dancing gives children a greater understanding and appreciation of music. We find that a very large number of pupils take up dancing for its educational benefits."

By this time the next competitor was ready and our time was up. Outside on the landing the flutter was still going on. The next competitor gave a last adjustment to her ballet shoes and fluffed out her frothing skirts. Then she rose on her toes, balanced a moment, and disappeared inside.



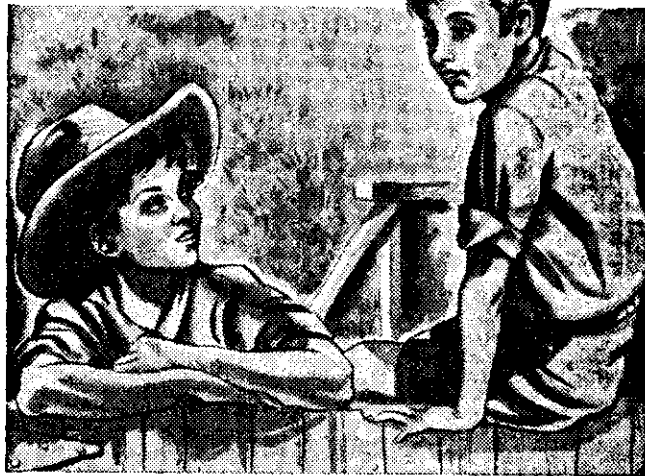
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