

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

New Zealand Literature

MY first conviction about New Zealand literature is that too much is claimed to be New Zealand literature which has no right to be included at all. I suppose it's inevitable with a small nation. We Scots do the same. If a man is born in Glasgow and his father becomes head of a department in Whitehall and he is educated in a London school and finishes off at Cambridge and joins a staff of a Manchester paper and then writes a novel on the hop-pickers of Kent, he will be hailed by the Aberdeen Free Press as a brilliant new Scots novelist. A New Zealand literature must be a New Zealand literature. For that reason I would exclude what I might call mere transients. Samuel Butler for example. How often in an article on the novel in New Zealand is "Erewhon" given a major portion of the space. Butler may have spent a year or two farming in the Canterbury Plains, he may have incorporated the scenery of the Southern Alps into the first chapters of "Erewhon," but he remains, in spite of the visit, an Englishman writing in the tradition of purely English literature. You might as well say that a Fiji Islander who spent a year in Canton and wrote a novel on his experiences was a Chinese novelist.—(Interview with Professor Ian Gordon on New Zealand Literature, 1YA, October 21.)

Grenfell of Labrador

LABRADOR and Newfoundland are the places with which Wilfred Grenfell's name is generally connected. Dr. Grenfell went to Labrador in 1892 and from then on he laboured in that most inhospitable country, and in Newfoundland and its waters.

The Danger of Being Derivative

INTERVIEWER: I think there is a distinctly new note to be heard in this country. These newer writers are writing from the inside, and writing about New Zealand as New Zealanders born and bred. I think some of them still show English influences though. The influence of T. S. Eliot, for example.

PROFESSOR GORDON: Yes, here we have a further danger. Even some of the newer writers are imitative. The only difference is that they have other models. I feel that it's every bit as bad being an Antipodean Eliot or Auden as being an Antipodean Tennyson or Mrs. Hemans. We must find our own idiom and our own originality, and not merely borrow the latest originality from England.—(Interview with Professor Ian Gordon, on New Zealand literature, 2YA, October 21.)

He established in this part of the world five hospitals, seven nursing stations, four orphanages, and co-operative stores, and he was active also in industrial, agricultural and child welfare work. The name of Wilfred Grenfell became known far and wide, and honours came thick upon him from his own country, from the United States and Canada. Someone described him a few years ago as one of the happiest men on earth. His hair was grey, his eyes were tired, and

his hands were rough from frost-bite and Arctic winds. He had then been shipwrecked four times among icebergs and slept all night on floating ice. He had been lost in the wilds of Labrador and almost frozen to death. He had been so hungry that he had eaten the seal skin straps from his boots. He was past 70, and he hadn't any money, but he had found the only thing that mattered in the world—true happiness.—(Tribute to Sir Wilfred Grenfell, 2YA, October 13.)

It's an Ill Wind

HARMAN: Such factors as the shortage of domestic help in the past 30 years has drastically affected the planning of homes, and has compelled more compact planning and more general use of labour-saving inventions—such as vacuum cleaners and electric water heating. Don't you think that young people who have been moved from one mode of living to another will remember some of the better things they have seen?



DAWBBER: It would be quite unlike children if they didn't. And the more observant and ambitious will want some of these advantages for themselves.

HARMAN: Then there is town planning. The devastation in the more crowded areas of large towns at Home, ghastly though it is, may hasten the re-arrangement of tenement houses, so that the poorer people will have more healthy homes, with greater open spaces and breathing space. But whether these new housing schemes will take the form of enormous blocks of flats, or whether they will be comparatively small homes in terraces, with all modern facilities and little private gardens, as some people advocate, I am not prepared to say. But I think Londoners will make better use of this upheaval than they did of the great city clearance in 1666—caused by the Great Fire.—(R. S. D. Harman and Bruce Dawber, "Things As Seen By An Artist—Future Trends," 3YA, October 16.)

Things That Matter

"THEY are getting down to essentials in England," I heard someone say recently, "and I guarantee they are feeling all the better for it." I have been thinking about that remark ever since I heard it, and have been trying to make up my own mind about what I consider to be essentials. It's not a bit easy. Modern civilisation seems to have buried the essential things of life under such a clutter of the unessential that it's difficult to dig down through the clutter and find the real essentials. We have all become so accustomed to luxuries, or to what would have been considered luxuries not so long ago, that we feel, rightly or wrongly, that we couldn't possibly do without them. . . . What are the essentials? Certainly not huge sums of money. Enough to keep us and our families in reasonable comfort is all that is really necessary. Motor cars that we probably can't afford but feel we must have because nearly everyone else has one are not essential. I like my car, and I'd hate to give it up, but it is very definitely a luxury. . . . All sorts of luxuries in the way of food are not essential, and we'd probably be healthier and therefore happier if we returned to the simple fare of our ancestors. For instance, in New Zealand we have the highest consumption of sugar per head of

Mrs. Roosevelt, Breaker of Precedents

THIS is Presidential election year in the United States, but to the busiest woman in the country, Eleanor Roosevelt, it is just something to be taken in her stride—that long, purposeful stride of hers. Over there, they've given up trying to work out how their First Lady gets through the amazing amount of work she does in a day. Her critics—and she has many—complain that she has no business to be doing most of it. A President's wife, they say, is in the drawing room of White House, and her work should be limited to giving and attending receptions.

But Eleanor Roosevelt plays many parts, not the least of which is that of a breaker of precedent. In her first week at the White House she completely shattered the tradition that a President's wife can have no views, no life, no activity of her own.—(Mrs. Vivienne Newson, "Some Memorable Women I Have Met," 2YA, October 19.)

the population in the world. Is it just a coincidence that we also enjoy the distinction of having about the worst teeth in the world?—(Talk to women by "Margaret.")

On a Welsh Mountain

I DON'T know which sort of reader is going to enjoy the keener pleasure: the experienced sheepman, who will wonder why pulpy kidney is a greater mystery in Wales than in New Zealand, and will appreciate what Firkbank did in systematic culling and breeding for type, or the average reader, who will be delighted by vivid pictures of unfamiliar scenes and operations, and will pick up all sorts of curious facts. For example, the Welsh sheep grows a wiry wool, with that fibrous hair in it called kemp. When the whirligig of fashion turns the ladies' demand to those very fuzzy tweeds that look as though they need shaving, up goes the price of Welsh wool—doubled! (J. H. E. Schroder, reviewing Thomas Firkbank's "I Bought a Mountain" 3YA, October 15).

French Revolution in Dress

THE effect of the French Revolution on women's dress was far-reaching. For centuries, women had been the followers and men the leaders in fashion. From now onward the tables were turned. After the revolution women discarded every extravagance of design, and arrived at the very simple Empire gown,



a modification of classical dress, which is shown in David's famous painting of Madame Recamier. This graceful high-waisted dress remained in vogue until 1820. By 1830 the exuberance of the 19th century is making itself felt and is expressed in women's clothing by making the silhouette stick out, first with leg-of-mutton sleeves—later with crinolines, then with bustles, and again with leg-of-mutton sleeves at the turn of the century. All this time she is tight-laced and wasp waisted. It is the age when ill-health is fashionable, the age of vapours and patent medicines. At the same time, the Victorian period marks the beginning of the emancipation of woman, and a new woman arises who wears tailored suits, and who smokes a cigarette and who has a club of her own.—(Mrs. Avice Bowbyes, "Fashions, Ancient and Modern: Dress," 2YA, October 22.)