

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

The Globe His Home

IGNAZ FRIEDMAN gave his first concert as a wonder child at the age of eight in the Greek town of Salonika, which is much in the news now, but he regards his concert with the Viennese Symphonic Orchestra as his real debut, and the beginning of his career as an artist. Since then he has several times toured all five continents, including the United States twelve times, South America seven times, and Europe every year. His concerts have thrilled different audiences all over the world 2,600 times. This is a record which has been broken by very few artists in the history of music. But that's not all by any means. His activity and vitality are unbelievable. He has published over 100 of his own compositions, and still more remain in manuscript. He has edited all the works of Chopin, Schumann and Liszt, and, in part, the works of Bach, Beethoven (sonatas) and Mendelssohn. Friedman left Poland after his matriculation. From that moment the entire globe became his home; peoples of different races, castes, colours and religions his compatriots and friends. Yet his Polish speech is magnificent, his love of his country is unshakable, his patriotism and sentiment for Poland remain firm. He travels on a Polish passport, and he assures us it will be his for life.—(Dr. Leon Lipson, "Ignaz Friedman—Some of His Memories and Impressions," 2YA, November 17.)

Illegal Recreations

THERE are not many of our modern amusements which can claim to be original. Motion pictures and the radio had, as far as we know, no counterparts in other days, but music and dance and outdoor sports are universal. Exhibitions of strange beasts and unusual sights charmed the ancient Egyptians just as they still do us. Equally persistent has been the diversion of gambling, which seems to have always been a parasite on every form of contest. The most primitive peoples have games of chance, and from India and China come long records of protests, and occasionally laws, against the evils of organised betting. All, of course, ineffective. Centuries ago the Corporation of London drove bear-baiters and disorderly theatres outside the city limits, but the crowd simply followed them out. Prize-fighting still takes place in New York city, I believe, although it is technically illegal. There is a famous decree of James IV. calling for a putting down of golf and football because of their disturbance of the sport of archery, the universal amusement of our ancestors and naturally of great value for the defence of the country; but in the Treasury accounts of the same James we find this amusing entry: "Item: the third day of February, to the King to play at Golf with the Earl of Bothwell, three French crowns, and for golf clubbes and balls for the King that he played with, sixty shillings.—(Dr. K. J. Sheen, "Fashions, Ancient and Modern: Amusements," 4YA, November 19.)



Too Much Obstruction

IN later chapters of his Centennial prize-winning essay "The Deepening Stream," M. H. Holcroft develops his own political ideas, largely in an attack on the younger generation of writers. His chief accusation against them is that they have imbibed second-hand theories from abroad, theories which are,

he insists, quite divorced from the practical experience of this country. In other words, he accuses them of being too abstract and too theoretical. Now whatever we may think about this opinion, it is an argument that comes most unconvincingly from Mr. Holcroft who is himself as abstract as any writer could possibly be. It is this abstractness which is his chief weakness. He almost succeeds in abstracting himself altogether from the New Zealand he writes about. Take, for instance, his attitude to the bush. He views it as might a tourist from the city, dreaming in its shade, feeling it something mysterious and unreal. But the people really influenced by the bush are those who have lived in it, and, more than that, worked in it—the deer-cullers and deer-stalkers of Manapouri, the axemen of North Auckland and Westland, the pioneers who carved farmland from the bush from North Cape to the Bluff. And these people are influenced not by Mr. Holcroft's "mysterious spiritual quality" but by the physical demands it makes on their lives. There is for them no mystery.—(John Harris, Book Talk, 4YA, November 6.)

A Luxury Liner

ONE feature of the Empress of Britain that I specially remember was the ballroom. Sir John Lavery had designed the decorations. The ceiling was a dome of midnight blue with silver stars. It was an exact copy of the sky, with the positions of all the stars as they were on the night she was launched. Heavy curtains of coppery pink velvet drew across the square windows that looked out to sea, and at the four corners of the room were white pillars with fountains of long, pink ostrich feathers, which swayed as dancers passed. The smoke-room, in black and Chinese-lacquer red was designed by Edmund Dulac, another famous artist. And there was a "Peacock Walk," a wide corridor between the drawingroom and the ballroom, with seats on either side, for a nightly display of dresses and jewels as people went back and forth. The cocktail bar, too, I remember. It was designed by that comic artist, Heath Robinson. The whole walls and ceiling were decorated in the most complicated series of wheels and pulleys and gear for taking the stones out of cocktail cherries, and other bits of amusing nonsense.—(Nelle Scanlan, "Shoes and Ships and Sealing-wax," 2YA, November 19.)

Ignaz Friedman's Theory

IGNAZ FRIEDMAN considers that the most musically educated audiences were those he appeared before in old, pre-Communist Russia, in Vienna, and Budapest. At present, the most difficult ones to please, and with a refined taste and understanding of music and art generally, are New York audiences. And he explains why. The standard of music and the possibilities for its development are higher in countries and centres with various and mixed nationalities, and these centres are the cradle of beautiful music and outstanding art. Friedman visited Palestine during his tours, and while there he gave seven concerts. He considers the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra the best in the world, at any rate the string orchestra, which includes 16 concert maestros. It is not because of charity or any demonstration of protest of a great man against racial persecutions, that Toscanini, the greatest conductor in the world, gives concerts so frequently in Palestine, says Friedman. It is simply the artistic satisfaction of commanding a group of excellent musicians.

A Diabolical Version Of Bowls

I ought not to leave these outdoor amusements without referring to the ancient and worshipful game of bowls. Its varieties, indoors and outdoors, are infinite. Dr. Johnson, in his dictionary, defined a bowl cautiously as a round mass which is rolled along the ground. The game we play in New Zealand was, I think, originally the Scottish variety. There was also, of course, an English one. The really fascinating type to me, however is the one still played in the North of England, in Lancashire particularly. It is called crown bowls, and from what I can learn of it, seems to be a truly diabolical game. Listeners will recall W. S. Gilbert's lines about the man who was compelled to play billiards with a twisted cue, on a cloth untrue, with elliptical billiard balls. Crown bowls is like that. The green rises from all sides to a crown in the centre anything from six inches to a foot high, and, just to make things interesting, you may have an undulating surface, no two greens being alike in this. The woods have bias as usual, and the jack is a spheroid, that is to say, not quite a sphere. To crown it all, the game can be played in any direction, from corner to corner if you like, so that different games cross each others' line. It is a game I should dearly like to see played; it must be the nearest thing to bedlam you could find in these days. I have never heard of it in New Zealand.—(Dr. K. J. Sheen, "Fashions, Ancient and Modern: Amusements," 4YA, November 19.)

And it is here that the Friedman theory of the artistic value of mixed nationalities finds confirmation—the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra includes Jews of Polish, German, Austrian, Czechoslovakian, Rumanian, and English birth.—(Dr. Leon Lipson, "Ignaz Friedman—Some of His Memories and Impressions," 2YA, November 17.)

The Royal Hospitallers

NOW to the home of the grand old Army Pensioners—the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. These old warriors, Royal Hospitallers, as they are called, are not to be pitied, as they have come very comfortably into a haven where they are cared for without anxiety for the morrow. The beauty of the Royal Hospital we owe to Sir Christopher Wren, and the oaken solidity of the interior is as British as the men it houses—a very worthy shrine of valour. It is worth seeing for the good of your soul and the enchantment of your eyes. It was Charles II. who founded the Hospital, in 1601. It stands in large grounds. The Royal Hospital has a last memory of the Duke of Wellington, for it was



in the Grand Hall that he lay in state, and so he, whose hooked nose the soldiers cheered, came back to them at the last and rested on the great oak dining table in the main hall. Some wonderful soldiers have lived within the Hospital walls. William Hissland holds the record—he married for the second time as he reached his century, and he attended his final muster in 1732, at the age of 112. His portrait is to be seen at Chelsea in his 110th year, in all the glory of scarlet and broadsword. Here at Chelsea the word charity is unknown, and an old soldier, on entering, is virtually coming to a home where he can live out the sunny autumn of his life in healthy independence and comfort.—("Gentlemen the King: A Birthday Tribute," 2YA, November 25.)