

HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

In this section weekly will appear a day by day record of the events of history in the making. As some time elapses in the publication of "The Listener" this diary is one week retrospective.

Unavoidably, the "History as it Happens" feature failed to appear last week, but the relevant days have been compressed and included in this week's summary.

Thursday, December 12

The capture of Sidi Barrani and a large number of prisoners including three generals was announced by Cairo headquarters.

The President of the Provisional Czechoslovakian Government, Dr. Benes, revealed to the newly formed Czechoslovakian State Council that at his request the British Government in an official note dated November 11 had expressly assured him it did not recognise the Munich settlement.

Friday, December 13

The sudden death was announced at Washington of the Marquis of Lothian, British Ambassador to the United States, while his important speech of the day before was still being reported.

Prisoners exceeding 20,000 with tanks, guns and equipment were reported to have been captured in the Western Desert.

Saturday and Sunday, December 14 and 15

The Italian forces were thrown back to the Libyan border and the unofficial estimate of the prisoners taken by the British reached 30,000. The retreat of the Italians had assumed the possibility of a rout, and there were reports of unrest in Italy.

Italians in Albania were reported to be falling back towards Valona and the Greeks claimed over 7000 prisoners since the beginning of fighting.

M. Laval, French Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister resigned and his right to succession to be Chief of State was abolished.

In Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch there were parades of the troops who had completed training for overseas and also of territorials and members of the National Military Service.

Monday, December 16

British troops on the Western Desert were scavenging the equipment of an entire Italian army and the landscape was strewn haphazard with millions of pounds worth of war material.

The Rome newspaper "Il Popolo d'Italia" admitted that Italian stories of Australian and New Zealand troops as incompetent mercenaries had been proved inaccurate as they were formidable fighters.

Italian officers taken prisoners in Albania revealed considerable dissension among the Italian army commanders.

Tuesday, December 17

A brilliant success had been achieved by the victorious army of the Nile, which, with the capture of Sollum and Fort Capuzzo, was chasing the Italians out of Egypt after eight days' fighting.

Reports from Italy indicated that Fascist publicists were changing their tune and becoming increasingly worried at the course of the war.

Wednesday, December 18

British tanks, artillery, and mechanised units were beginning to close in on the town of Bardia. Unofficial reports gave the total of Italian prisoners as 74,000.

President Roosevelt revealed a plan for the United States to lease armaments to Britain.

There was a seven-hour raid by the R.A.F. on Mannheim.

M. Laval was released from confinement at the request of Hitler's representative in Paris, Herr Abetz.

Thursday, December 19

Despite denials from the Axis, there were continued reports from Belgrade of the arrival of German troops in Italy.

The Italians continued to be forced back in Libya and Albania.

The New York "Times" said Britain has been advised to place additional orders totalling three thousand million dollars on assurances of credit being forthcoming when needed. It is understood the advice came from President Roosevelt.

Friday, December 20

British tanks were sweeping round Bardia and driving towards Tobruk. British battleships heavily bombed Valona and cruiser forces swept up the Adriatic Sea without sighting the enemy.

Speaking in Tokio, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Matsuoka, warned America against action in Europe which would result in a clash in the Pacific.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, announced that apparently one New Zealand and four British ships were lost by enemy action at Nauru Island.

Saturday and Sunday, December 21 and 22

British forces completed the encirclement of Bardia.

The air war over Britain was resumed after a pause of several days, and at the same time the R.A.F. struck at Berlin, the Ruhr, and the invasion ports.

Monday, December 23

Lord Halifax was appointed British Ambassador to Washington in succession to Lord Lothian. Mr. Anthony Eden was appointed Foreign Minister, and Captain David Margesson War Minister.

Mr. Churchill, speaking direct to the Italians, said their misfortunes were caused by one man and urged them once more to take a hand in shaping their own fortunes.

Tuesday, December 24

In a Christmas message, the Pope stated that the Church could not favour any one political system, but the new order must be based on victory over the principle that might makes right.

There was no air activity over Britain on Christmas Eve.

"NOEL, NOEL, NOEL, NOEL"

Brilliant Young Man Turned Publicist

(Written for "The Listener" by C. R. ALLEN)

WHEN "The Young Idea" was produced at the Savoy Theatre with the author as jeune premier, and Miss Kate Cutler as grand dame, Noel Coward's boy and girl friends assembled and chanted "Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel." That is not exactly yesterday, and in the interim the actor-composer-dramatist-producer has covered much ground. He has encountered the sunshine that played upon "Hay Fever" and the storm that burst upon "Sirocco." He has now followed the lead of Barrie and turned publicist.

As a child player Noel Coward appeared in "Peter Pan" and "Where the Rainbow Ends." He was not actually at the Italia Conti School, but he must have learned much from that redoubtable trainer of stage children, who delivers the goods, or used to do so, piping hot and word-perfect. The present writer once required a child to play the part of "The Boy With The Torn Doublet" in a little fantasy called "The Four Foundlings." When the costume was handed over at Miss Conti's office in Orchard Street she boggled at the rent already effected in the article in question. That has nothing to do with Noel Coward, except in so far as it throws light on Italia Conti for whom, and for

anxiety to their mothers by reason of certain constitutional deficiencies which they have both effectually outgrown. If you were to ask me in what play Noel

Noel Coward at the ZB'S

From 4ZB (only) relay of Noel Coward's Patriotic Concert, Thursday, January 9, 9.30 p.m.

From 3ZB (only) relay of Noel Coward's Patriotic Concert, Saturday, January 11, 9.30 p.m.

From 2ZB (only) relay of Noel Coward's Patriotic Concert, Tuesday, January 14, 9.30 p.m.

From 1ZB (only) relay of Noel Coward's Patriotic Concert, Thursday, January 16, 9.30 p.m.

ALL STATIONS: The Sunday night "National Service Talk" will be given by Noel Coward, Sunday, January 12, 8.45 p.m.

A final talk has been arranged from all stations on Friday, January 17, 7.45 p.m.

Coward approached perfection I would reply "The Marquise."

With him the family album has become a kind of cornucopia, pouring out scenes and situations, cameos and topical what-nots with a profusion that we well might envy. "Cavalcade," of course, represents him at his most comprehensive. No one but an actor-dramatist would have thought of a life-belt bearing the words "Titanic" as a background for one of the most poignant cameos in the whole collection. Noel Coward's visit to New Zealand will give him another vignette to his crowded travelogue book.



"Pix" photograph
NOEL COWARD, too, can be apprehensive about audiences. A candid shot just before one of his Australian concerts

whose sister, Noel Coward as a little boy had an endearing soubriquet which unfortunately eludes me at the moment. Noel Coward was the stage child in excelsis. His father, as all readers of "Present Indicative" know, sold pianos, or tried to.

A boy's best friend is his mother, as the old song used to remind us, and Noel Coward seems to have been on excellent terms with his. In this respect he resembles another dramatist, John Van Druten. Both lads were a source of

DIVE BOMBING

"DIVE bombing is as simple as throwing stones," explained Oliver Stewart, air writer and former test pilot, recently. "Instead of going through an elaborate series of operations like those a gunner goes through or a high-level bomb aimer, the dive bomber pilot takes a look at his target, stuffs the nose of his aeroplane down, and throws the bomb. There is nothing new in it. But the Germans have certainly developed dive bombing extensively and used it a lot in this war."

"When the pilot makes his attack he goes into a very steep dive. It looks almost vertical. He has the air brakes on because he does not want to gain too high a speed. For he is driving not to gain speed, but to throw the bomb correctly. He sights the target so that it seems to rest just above the nose of his downward plunging aeroplane—much as the target is sighted with a rifle. And he releases his bomb as he pulls out of the dive. Notice the simplicity of the process. No elaborate calculations, no allowing for this, that and the other, no complicated instruments and switches. The bomb is simply thrown at its target."