

# DID YOU HEAR THIS?

## Extracts From Recent Talks

### Listening Under Difficulties

**I**MMEDIATELY the news bulletin is over I turn off the radio and concentrate on the news for a few minutes in silence. By this means I gain a much clearer story of the general situation. New names of places I scribble down in a note book so that I can check up on the shifting battle grounds. Apart from improving my geography I gain a much clearer story of events. It is essential, to my way of



thinking, to listen without interruption and with an open mind. It's very disconcerting, for instance, to be listening with full attention and to hear someone saying "And when you come home to-night you might bring back a pound of sausages and a dozen bananas." Now there's nothing I like better than buying sausages and bananas, but the same sausages and bananas are quite out of place when listening to the radio news. It may be that the smallest diversion will break the continuity of the bulletin. Strange but it's always the most important little bits that are missed. Only the other day I was very anxious to hear a special talk. We were having tea on the veranda with a few friends, but I managed to sneak away to a friend's house nearby; he, by the way, is one of my converts. He, too, wanted to hear this same talk. With stealth we managed to elude members of his family and tuned in the radio. We were getting on fine, when in rushed one of his nieces who wanted the newspaper. My friend simply said "Shush," but that was no good. "Uncle, you must be sitting on it"—again he said "Shush." It was of no use, he had to get up so that she could see for herself. Then I had to get up with almost the same result. In my case there was no newspaper, but instead I was sitting on some needlework which her aunt had evidently mislaid. Niece called aunt, who came and rescued her handiwork, which was none the worse for wear, except that her needle was missing. Well that was the end of our listening. I met Uncle next day, and he was seriously thinking of buying a crystal set and earphones so that he could, when occasion warranted it, disappear into his bedroom or tool shed when he wished to listen undisturbed.—(*"Just Listening In,"* by Major F. H. Lampen, 2YA, January 2.)

### The Shaggy Dog Stories

**I** AM going to tell you a story. This is the story: A New Yorker who had picked up a big white shaggy stray dog saw an advertisement in a New York paper offering a £500 reward for an animal answering such a description, if returned to an address in Bayswater, in London. He immediately took ship to England with the dog, and in due course called at the Bayswater address and rang the bell. "You advertised in New York about a lost dog," he said to the man who opened the door, "a shaggy dog." "Oh," said the man coldly, "Not so darned shaggy," and slammed the door in the New Yorker's face. That is the end of the tale, believe it or not. And smile at it or don't as you prefer. The point about this story is that it gives the title to a whole series or epidemic of anecdotes of a like nature, which have had a considerable vogue in the United States—the Shaggy Dog stories. For their careful collection into handy reference form we have to thank the Editors of the American magazine, *Esquire*, and the editor in chief of that publication, who has now assembled from its pages a highly attractive anthology of articles, short stories and various essays and commentaries, under the title "The Bedside Esquire."

"Shaggy Dog Stories," explains the writer of the article on them in this book, "are called that because there is no other description that defines them any better." Their value is, he explains, highly esoteric, but if one specialises one may come to recognise them. Since all knowledge is the field of the intelligent reader—and, of course, the intelligent listener—to-day, I propose to provide you with one or two specimens, which will enable you to know a shaggy dog next time you meet one. Here is a comparatively simple fellow: When General Tom Thumb, the famous midget in Barnum's fabulous circus, was appearing in an American middle western town the local newspaper sent a reporter to interview him. The reporter knocked at the hotel door, and it was opened by a towering giant of a man, who filled the doorway from threshold to lintel and from jamb to jamb. "I want to interview General Thumb," the newspaperman said. "Glad to see you," the giant replied. "I'm General Tom Thumb." "Why," said the reporter, peering up at the man, "you're crazy—Tom Thumb is a little wee guy." "Well," the giant replied, "This is my day off." If you can see anything funny in that the Shaggy Dog has bitten you.—(*Book Talk*, by John Moffatt, 4YA, December 18.)

### Irish Racing Enthusiasts

**A**FTER breakfast came family prayers, the family consisting of Phillipa, and "a vinegar-faced henchwoman." During the long prayers sounds as of a hunt came through the open window. Finally a small boy "with a face freckled like a turkey's egg" called quietly through the open window "Ma'am! Ma'am." Mrs. Knox waved him away, but the Amen followed in a most unusual place. The small boy produced a donkey and a bath-chair even while Mrs. Knox scrambled up from her knees. "They're found," she said. Having added to her previous attire a fur cape, her boots and a garden hat, she was soon in the bath-chair, the small boy belabouring the donkey, and Phillipa hanging on behind. Soon Johnny, the donkey boy, spotted a fox. Two or three hounds came rushing up, and soon a small and very unorthodox hunt was in progress. The fox tore on, pursued by the bath-chair party, till it came to a place where a stream went under a road by a culvert. "Pon me conscience, he's into the old culvert!" exclaimed Mrs. Knox. "There was one of my hounds choked there long ago! In the hurry and excitement the donkey and chair were overturned but the indomitable old lady went on to the culvert where the three human beings and five hounds both saw and smelt the fox. One of the hounds went in after it, but as there was what Johnny called a "strong grating" at the far end they couldn't get out there. Mrs. Knox ordered Johnny in to pull the hound out. "I'd be in dread, ma'am," whined Johnny. "Balderdash," said the implacable Mrs. Knox. "In with you!" Soon, from the depths of the culvert Johnny reported that he had the hound by the tail, but he couldn't get him out and the water was rising.—(*A Few Minutes with Women Novelists: Somerville and Ross*, by Miss Margaret Johnston, 2YA, January 4.)

### The Englishman's Garden

**A**N Englishman's house may be his castle, but his garden is a place of special privacy. The loveliest gardens and grounds in England are hidden away behind high stone or brick walls. Many of the famous country homes and manor houses, which are set back in great parks, have high, solid stone walls for miles and miles right around the vast estate. Even

## Old Wellington

**L**ET us turn over the pages of an old Wellington Almanack for 1865 for a few minutes. At least a half of it is taken up with pages and pages of advertisements. That sounds rather dry reading but believe me it isn't. These advertisements tell us a good deal about the real life of the community. They bring the past to life. They are grouped according to professions and trades. There are a few names among these advertisements that we still see to-day on Wellington's shop and office signs. In one of the Wellington draper's advertisements in the Almanack I notice a price list which may interest the girls—the prices are per yard. Calicoes, 6d, Prints 9d, huckaback 5½d, muslin from 4½d. All Wool Flannels, from 1/3, De Laines, from 8¾d. Black Silk (best), 3/3. Muslin Silk and Fancy Garibaldi Jackets, from 7/6 each. Men's suits in the best doeskin, from 50/-. Hairdressing, shaving and shampooing was to be had at the New Salon conducted by Professor Rowley. A Manners Street butcher, Charles E. Luxford, advertised "Sucking pigs always on hand." There was only one mail a week to and from Wanganui, and two a week to and from Karori. There were two mails a week to and from Featherston, Carterton and Masterton. Every other week a mail went to and was received from Napier. The rest of New Zealand was served by mails as the ships came and went. There was no railway in Wellington district of course. There were two pillar boxes in Wellington—one at the corner of Molesworth and Pipitea Streets—the other at the corner of Cuba and Ghuznee Streets.—(*From "Ebor's" Scrapbook, "Wellington in 1865,"* 2YA, December 30.)

the smaller ones have hedges. A wire fence is something you seldom see in England, except, perhaps, in some of the newly developed areas. Brick and stone and workmen's wages make these solid walls an expensive matter to-day. But when most of them were built, a century, perhaps many centuries ago, both material and labour were cheap. And I don't suppose wire fences had even been thought of. This characteristic love of privacy among the English makes their



gardens a quiet, secluded haven, which they fully enjoy. It is so different from the American ideas of no fences at all. All the lawns and gardens are open to prying eyes. It certainly makes the residential street attractive to the passerby, but there is absolutely no privacy for the family. But then, again their mode of life is very different from ours. They don't use their gardens—sit in them as we do. Every Englishman is at heart a countryman, and loves a garden. Particularly every Englishman I should say. And you will find this love of a garden in every class, rich and poor alike. They not only love their garden, but take a delight in working in their garden. And except for a brief period in mid-winter, they can work in it all the year round. The American climate, for the most part, is not so kind. The winters are too severe, and the summers are too hot. Gardens don't flourish in the United States as they do in England. And in England, one of the great joys of summer is the garden; so much time is spent out of doors. Tea in the garden is so popular on a summer day; tea under the trees; but to enjoy this fully, they must have privacy, and to ensure this privacy they build high walls to shut out the world and prying eyes. I am sure that is why you find the windows in the Mews always looking down on to the paved street where the coaches were washed, and the horses harnessed.—(*"Shoes and Ships and Sealing-wax,"* by Nelle Scanlan, 2YA, December 31.)