

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Miss Bayliss' Ballet

LIKE the Old Vic, Sadler's Wells was a people's theatre, mostly devoted to ballet, while the Old Vic. put on Shakespeare. These two theatres held fast to their splendid tradition, and nothing would induce Lilian Bayliss to lower her standard and put on some commercial success, that might pay better. She, alone, placed the high quality of her production above the mere making of money. She was a great idealist, a real fighter for the cause to which she had given her life.



To the western mind ballet dancing was associated with Russia, and English dancers hid their identity under Russian names. Anton Dolin, who is probably the most successful British dancer, was an Irish boy. If his name wasn't Doolan, it was something like that. But a few enthusiasts were determined to kill this false idea that the English lacked the temperament to make ballet dancers, and though other schools of ballet started, and were more or less successful, it was not until Lilian Bayliss opened the Sadler's Wells theatre as a centre for British ballet, that even the English critics were converted. Some of these critics had been bitterly opposed to the scheme, but old Lilian Bayliss stuck to her guns, and made them acknowledge her triumph. During the heyday of the Russian ballet, it was produced by Russian composers, artists and choreographers. It was the success of Sadler's Wells that led to English composers writing ballet music, English choreographers producing the ballet, and English artists designing the costumes and decor. The new ballet was English through and through. It was not a poor imitation of the Russian ballet. It took its own themes and used its own treatment of the subject, and in time evolved a characteristically British ballet. And made a big success of it.—(*"Ships and Shoes and Sealing-Wax,"* by Nelle Scanlan, 2YA, January 10.)

Remote Islanders

THE early contracts of these island peoples with Europeans were not always beneficial to the islanders or creditable to the Europeans. These Gilbert and Ellice Islands for many years in the second half of last century were the happy hunting grounds of the "Blackbirders," who under a pretence of recruiting labour, often decoyed these brown skinned islanders aboard their vessels and practically kidnapped, selling them to a virtual slavery in the mines of Peru or on the plantations of slave owners in South America. In later years, when Missions began to work in these islands and when the British flag began to exercise more control in the Pacific, many of the islanders were recruited under better but still far from satisfactory conditions for work on the sugar plantations of Queensland. Nowadays, thanks to the protection of the British Government and to the influence of Christian missions, things have much improved. Many Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders are now recruited for mining the phosphates at Ocean Island, where under the wise and enlightened management of the British Phosphate Commission, they are employed under good conditions and given a fair return for their labour, and where they are assured of fair dealing and of repatriation to their home islands at the end of their term of service. Apart from this, these people have few contacts with the world. There is but little opportunity for trade, and no trading vessels call

David Low, Internationalist

IF David Low is not the greatest cartoonist in the world to-day, he is the best-known, at any rate in English-speaking countries. David Low started drawing in Christchurch and then moved to the Sydney "Bulletin." From Sydney, Low went to London, where for some time he drew for the "Daily News." For some years now he has drawn for the "Evening Standard" and syndicated papers. Low has become a national and also an international institution. His cartoons are looked for eagerly in many countries. No one has his extraordinary combination of humour and force, with the knack of appealing to the mass of readers. His cartoons are true footnotes to history, and we might go further and say they are history illuminated by flashes of lightning.—("N.Z. Brains Abroad" (7), 1YA, January 26.)

except at one or two centres to carry away the copra which has been collected by small vessels working among the islands. The islands are quite outside the route of the usual steamship lines, and there are no facilities for tourists to visit them.—(*"Building Christian Civilisation. Britain's Remotest Colony,"* by the Rev. G. H. Eastman, 4YA).

The First Girls' Story

DO you sometimes take down from your bookshelves a battered volume so dear to you in your girlhood that you have not been able to part with it since? You remember so well how you loved it, how you cried over parts of it, and enjoyed crying over it. Perhaps the book has been passed on to your own daughter who enjoys it as much as you did yourself. If you do sometimes turn back the pages of the past in this way, I can be pretty sure that one of the books you look into is "Little Women" by the American authoress, Louisa M. Alcott. It is an evergreen book. Girls loved it when it first appeared in 1868, and I can testify that they love it just as much to-day. "Little Women" was



a pioneer in its line. Before it appeared there were really no books for girls according to our standards. A Boston publisher asked Miss Alcott to write such a book but when he saw the manuscript it wasn't what he expected and he demurred about publishing it. But he was a sensible man, and he reflected that perhaps he, a bachelor getting on in years, was not the best judge of what was needed. So he "Tried it on the dog"—the dog in this case being a niece and some other girls. They were of different families and they read the story without reference to one another; but they agreed in their boundless enthusiasm for the book and begged him to publish it. And, like every proper uncle, he agreed to oblige his niece, and the other young ladies.—(*"A few minutes with Women Novelists" No. 10, by Margaret Johnston, 2YA, January 18.*)

Anglo-American Ties

IN Stephen Leacock's new book, "The British Empire," he writes, "A generation of English children stalked warily with Fenimore Cooper through the American forest, fearing to snap a twig. Another generation bedewed the pages of "Uncle Tom's

Cabin" with its tears. After the Civil War, the Massachusetts Public School, founded two and a half centuries before, came home to England in the Education Act of 1870. But if anyone wishes to understand the relation between Canada and the States better than history can tell or statistics teach, let him go and stand anywhere along the Niagara-Buffalo frontier at holiday time. Here are the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jacks all mixed up together and the tourists pouring backward and forward over the international bridge: immigration men trying in vain to sort them out! Niagara mingling its American and Canadian waters and its honeymoon couples. We are satisfied on each side of the line to keep our political systems different, because annexation in the old bygone sense has vanished out of the picture. And in the other sense, of a union of friendship that needs neither constitution nor compacts, we have it NOW, and mean to keep it." (From Miss Glanville's Book Talk, 3YA, January 9.)

Wavell Writes on Allenby

ONE of the most successful generals in the last war was Allenby. His campaigns in Palestine and Syria which ended in the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Turkish armies were brilliant examples of the war of manoeuvre. They stood out by contrast against the dull immobility of mass warfare on the Western Front. Allenby the man was no less interesting than Allenby the soldier. His bursts of temper were notorious throughout the army. And yet his greatest interests in life were simple things—wild flowers and birds, gardening and children. The life of such a man has all the elements of an interesting biographical study.



Such a study has now been written. Its interest for us at this moment is immensely increased by the fact of its author being the Commander of the British forces in the Near East, General Sir Archibald Wavell. The book's title is "Allenby: A Study in Greatness." It was to have been a full life in two volumes, but the outbreak of war and the author's duties therein interrupted its completion. The present volume ends with the 1918 campaigns. It discusses, broadly speaking, two main aspects of Allenby's life—the formation and development of his personal character, and his military technique. The first makes an interesting psychological study, and incidentally reveals General Wavell as a shrewd observer of human nature, possessed of real insight and singular ability as a writer. The second—the military aspect—is of special significance at the present time, when General Wavell is himself executing a campaign which has many striking similarities with that of Allenby in Palestine. Both involve an advance along a narrow coastal route, both make use of swift outflanking manoeuvres, both depend for success very largely on an element of surprise achieved by the most careful preparation and months of special training, both have to contend as much against natural forces of heat, sand and lack of water as against enemy arms. Above all, Wavell, like Allenby, appreciates the need for mobility if warfare is to be in any sense decisive. The only difference is that whereas Allenby used cavalry, Wavell has a highly mechanised army. The difference is immaterial. The important point is the conception of mobility. Throughout his book one feels General Wavell studying this idea, examining its application by Allenby, contrasting its complete breakdown in the entanglement of huge armies in France. His own problem, implicit through the book, has been the materialisation of this idea in terms not of cavalry and camel-corps, but of tanks and aeroplanes and motor lorries. There developed the strategy which has led to Bardia.—(*Book Talk, 4YA, January 8.*)