

# DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

## Move On, Please

I PICKED up recently a picture of the White Tower in the Tower of London. It was bombed not so long ago, but not completely destroyed — “bent, but not broken,” as the Cockneys would say. That picture reminded me of a day in the last war when I was on leave and was given a special pass to visit the Tower. Then it was that I got into conversation with an old veteran of the Yeoman Warders of His Majesty's Tower of London, and it was from him that I learnt that this tower was the oldest public building in London and dated back to the Early Norman days, and it was then still practically in its original condition. I wanted to see the Crown Jewels, but my guide told me that I would have to go to the other side of England if I wanted to see them, as they had been shifted for safety's sake a long time ago. From him I learnt that the walls of the Wakefield Tower which houses the Jewel House were 8 feet thick, further that the Tower was fireproof, burglar proof and waterproof, but unfortunately the builder in William the Conqueror's day never reckoned on it having to be bomb proof. I didn't know till then that the Tower had been bombed, but I was shown where a bomb hit the railings of the Tower, and where another fell into the moat, yet another struck the Royal Mint across the road, and the fourth dropped into Old Father Thames within a few yards of the Jewel House. He had a fund of good stories and told me that just before the last war there was a German woman who was seen gazing at the six million pound collection. She went up to the Yeoman on duty and remarked: “You may think the jewels are wonderfully guarded, but they will soon belong to the Kaiser.” He finished the story by saying that all the Yeoman on duty could say was, “I don't think so Madam, but please pass along.” — (“Just London,” by Major F. H. Lampen, 2YA, February 6.)



## Free Men and Fascists

THERE is a line of argument which you probably come across as often as I do. It suggests that democracy has many weaknesses, that it has much to learn from the Fascist States, that, in fact, we need a little Fascism in our own country. The corollary of this is that Fascism is strong, democracy is weak, and democratic countries can only defeat Fascist states by adopting a certain amount of Fascism themselves. This argument, of course, is thoroughly false. But its falsity is not always apparent at first sight and any book which helps us to a sounder understanding of the matter is to be welcomed. Three such books have recently been published, “Armies of Freeman” by Tom Wintringham, “Dynamic Defence” by Liddell Hart, and “Warfare” by Ludwig Renn. The same theme runs clearly through them all. Briefly, it is this: democracy is strong, Fascism is weak, using those adjectives in their practical sense. It is the freedom of individual men that gives strength to its armies. For free men cannot be beaten. They have qualities of enterprise, initiative and endurance which cannot be bred by dictatorships. Each book tackles the problem in a different way. Tom Wintringham in “Armies of Freeman” goes to history. He relates how, at different historical times, fighting against seemingly impossible odds, armies of free men have beaten highly-disciplined crack military forces. His examples are the Greek defeat of the Persians, the war of Spartacus against the Roman Legions, the British victory at Crecy, the American War of Independence, and the British victory in 1918. The

## Waltzing Matilda

BANJO PATERSON was one of the most popular poets Australia has produced, and his verse has carried the sights and sounds and scents of Australia, and its ways of life, far and wide. Australian-born and educated, Paterson wrote verse and prose that were racy of the soil. We have nothing in New Zealand like his “Man From Snowy River,” and “Clancy of the Overflow,” or “The Travelling Post Office.” They are popular ballads which have become part of the Australian heritage. Some of his ballads are likely to live for a long while and perhaps none is more assured of what is called literary immortality than “Waltzing Matilda,” that song of the Australian outback, which of recent years has become so popular in and beyond Australia. The story of the song's composition is worth telling. Paterson was staying in a Queensland sheep station, and one day as he was being driven into Winton, they passed a man carrying a swag. “That's what we call ‘Waltzing Matilda’ in these parts,” said Paterson's host, and Paterson was so struck with the phrase that he wrote the verses immediately; his sister wrote the tune; and the song was sung the same night. Dr. Thomas Wood, author of “Cobbers,” who is a professional musician, describes it as “a thundering good song,” “good enough to be the unofficial national anthem of Australia, as the Border sings ‘John Peel.’” It is significant that a recent book on Australia by a visitor bears the title “Waltzing Matilda.” — (Tribute to Banjo Paterson—2YA, February 6.)

book is highly stimulating. Its concern is with the present rather than the past, with freedom and the defeat of Fascism rather than the elaboration of historical research. And for this very reason, his history comes to life in a most exciting manner. — (Book Talk by John Harris, 4YA, February 5.)

## Homely Nobility

IT was at Ancoats, the poor quarter of Manchester that the central figure of “Fame is the Spur,” by Howard Spring, spent his childhood over 60 years ago, in a small house, in a mean street, and spurred on by fame we find him an old man in his seventies in a beautiful home in London—Viscount Shawcross of Handsworth. We still like him, having travelled with him through nearly 700 closely printed pages, though on the way we've often doubted him. To begin with, we see him a little child in arms. His mother has no marriage certificate, but she and the child are sheltered by a working man, a Wesleyan local preacher and his sister. The history of the Labour Party in England goes side by side with this story till the election of 1931, when Hamer Shawcross was the right-hand man of Ramsay MacDonald, and party to all he did on that occasion. We will close with a little incident of the Coronation of George VI. The old man in his ermine; under his coat sandwiches put up by his housekeeper; then the pouring rain. He is in bed enjoying the fire. His son, who has been travelling, is announced, and comes in on the heels of the butler. “My dear boy,” said Hamer. “You're looking fine, father.” “I'm as good as most at 73—I think I'll get up.” “No, no, father. Pendelton's



been telling me what a barbarous day you've had. I've just been looking at your velvet and ermine drying by the kitchen fire. The Coronet is on the hob.” He laughed, and Hamer was glad; there was no malice in the laughter. This book is long, but you will learn much from it as I have done. The history of the last 70 years is told, as it is best told, in the story of human lives.—(Book review by Miss G. M. Glanville, 3YA, December 3.)

## Yankees and Southerners

THERE are Americans who live their whole lives in one corner of the country and have little personal acquaintance with other sections. Under such conditions, there flourish the local patriotisms and the provincial jealousies which may or may not conflict with a national sentiment. New Englanders on the Atlantic sea-coast sometimes feel that their corner is a unit, separate and distinct. New Yorkers may belittle other areas because their city is the biggest in the Union, and their skyscrapers the tallest; the Southern States — Virginia, Alabama and the rest — still feel that they form their own conclave, even though their attempt to secede from the Union last century, was defeated. To them, a Northerner is a Yankee, and as such, an object of suspicion. Out West are communities that fear domination by the Atlantic States, and are not so far removed from the pioneer days as their eastern compatriots. When I was in the north-western State of Washington on the Pacific coast, they told me tales of encounters with the Indian tribes that were still within the range of living memory. One popular story will illustrate the supposed attitude of a typical easterner to the West. In 1928, Governor Alfred E. Smith was the Democratic candidate for President; he was a native of New York, and knew little of America outside his own State. It is said that a reporter asked him: “How many States do you expect to win west of the Mississippi?” To which, Al Smith replied: “Well, what States have you got out there?” — (“The Political System of the United States: (1) The People of the United States and Their Country,” by Professor Leslie Lipson, 2YA, February 10.)



## “Deephaven” Authoress

THE New England States have a long history and a proud one. They were colonised between 1620 and 1640, when 21,000 persons came here from England. They were people of strong religious beliefs and sound character. They were earnest, vigorous and courageous, and the love of learning was strong among them. It is no wonder that from New England have come the most powerful influences in the development of the United States, influences quite out of proportion to the size of the territory. You may remember that in my talk on Harriet Beecher Stowe I mentioned that after she went to live in New England, she used local material for a few novels. These novels were read greedily by a little girl who lived in Maine, Sarah Orne Jewett. She was a delicate little girl, often unable to go to school, but her father, a country doctor and a wise man of wide interests, had a good library in which Sarah read omnivorously. Besides, she often used to go about with her father on his visits to country patients, and from their talks she unconsciously learnt to observe every detail of the countryside. She met, too, the people of the country, and the fisher folk and farmers. And so, when she began to write seriously she had a complete knowledge of her subject — people of Maine in their native setting. A series of sketches and stories were collected under the title “Deephaven,” the name she gave in her writings to her native town, Berwick. She became recognised as one of the leading writers of New England. Sarah Orne Jewett died in 1909 at the age of sixty. Her achievement was that she fixed for ever a picture of New England when the prosperity brought by its West Indian trade had deserted it, and before the modern period of smoke and steam had begun. — (“A Few Minutes With Women Novelists” (13) Some New England Writers. By Margaret Johnston, 2YA, February 8.)