

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Librarians Old and New

I THINK there was a general belief that librarianship was an occupation for people of mediocre ability and idle inclinations, and that the appropriate posture of a librarian was sitting back in his chair smoking and with his feet across the table. There may be some who still answer to that Dickensian description, but they bear no part in the library service which we are giving to New Zealand to-day. Entrance to the ranks of librarians is now open only to young people who have matriculated, and they can hope to advance in their profession only by passing regular examinations in subjects of the arts curriculum of the University and others of a purely technical character peculiar to their work in the library. We are doing all we can to enhance the efficiency of libraries in the Dominion. In this we have had the most cordial sympathy and assistance of the Government and the generous co-operation of the local bodies which control libraries.—(Talk by Dr. G. H. Scholefield, 4YA, February 19.)



He Knitted

JULIUS KNIGHT was an expert at knitting, and he spent a great portion of his spare time during the Great War making socks for the soldiers. He was not young enough to go on active service. On one occasion he was using primary red, white and blue wool, and the articles were to be sold for patriotic purposes. An offer of £1 was made for them there and then, but Julius, shrewd Scot, would not sell. They were afterwards sold from the stage for a high figure on behalf of one of the war funds. He was once asked how he acquired the knack of knitting. He said, quite simply, that in his home in Dumfries his three sisters knitted every evening—there was no other diversion—and he had simply picked it up. Mr. Knight continued to act till the early 20's when he retired to a lovely home in Hull, England. Unlike many actors, Mr. Knight invested his money carefully, consequently he was quite well off when he retired. Julius Knight was unquestionably the most popular actor the Australian and New Zealand stage has known, or is ever likely to know.—(Talk by John Farrell, 3YA, February 27.)

Agile at Eighty

THERE is a saying that every other Yorkshireman is an oddity or a character. If this is true, Ebor may be an oddity—perhaps that's not for me to say. But I can, and do, declare that the Squire of Walton Hall was an oddity and a character. He was one of the most remarkable naturalists who have ever studied the ways of the creatures of the wild. Once he set out on a series of adventurous and dangerous journeys in Guiana in search of the poison with which the Indians tipped their arrows. On one of his visits to Europe he went to Rome and while there he climbed to the top of the lightning conductor at St. Peter's. Then, at a distance of over four hundred feet above street level he stood on the head of the angel on the Castello. Waterton left his glove on the top of the lightning conductor, but as this spoiled the conductor's usefulness he was compelled by the authorities to climb up again and bring it down. Charles Waterton was a climber all his life, and even when he was over eighty years of age he would shin up a tree more



like an agile cat than a human being. On his jaunts into the jungles of South America he was dressed only in a shirt, a pair of trousers, and a hat. He went barefoot, carrying with him a gun to provide food and specimens of rare and new animals. In one of his books he wrote:

"There is not much danger in roving among snakes and animals, if you only have self-command. You must not approach them abruptly, if you do you will have to pay for your rashness. They will always retire from the face of a man unless pressed by hunger or suspicious of an attack, as in the case of a snake being trod upon.—(From "Ebor's Scrapbook," 2YA March 3.)

Reading de Luxe

THE ticket gave me access to all the books in one of the finest libraries in existence, I think about 3,000,000 books, of which hundreds of thousands were available directly, ranged on the walls of the reading room. This splendid room is of great size, with rows upon rows of desks leading out from the circular centre desk, round which from floor to ceiling are ranged books, with many more books kept in other rooms. A reader has a comfortable, padded chair to sit in, at a large desk, well stocked with pens, paper, etc., and attendants bring to him, on a large sort of butler's waggon on silent wheels, the

Unhappy Love

WHEN I was preparing the third of these poetry hours, in which a number of love poems were spoken, I read quite a lot on the subject. I was struck again by the comparatively large number of love poems that are unhappy. So often lovers seemed to be frustrated—to be losing their loved ones through death or some other cause, often unspecified. Happy love poems seemed quite difficult to find. Yet there is a fair amount of happy love in the world. Well, here is a happy love poem, read by John Gielgud—a lovely thing of pure joy, and the irony of it is that it is by Christina Rossetti, who had an unhappy love affair and never married.—(Poetry Hour, No. 4, 2YA, February 28.)

books he needs. Now, how does he get just the books he wants from the millions of books available? The first requisition of a good library is a properly arranged catalogue, and the catalogue of the library, itself a work in hundreds of volumes, is prepared on splendid principles. The reader goes to the catalogues placed round the attendants' desks in the centre of the room, looks up his book—this may take some little time—writes down the reference letters and figures on a form, and hands it to an attendant. In a short time the volume is brought to him at his seat. The cataloguing is so complete that a friend of mine who worked in the Museum, assured me that a publication, I think of a piece of music, entitled Popsy-Wopsy, was catalogued under "Popsy—see also Wopsy," and under "Wopsy—see also Popsy."—"The British Museum and Its Reading Room," by Llewellyn Etherington, 1YA, March 2.)

Treasures of English Literature

THE British Museum's early manuscripts alone are of priceless worth and wonderful interest; it has the Alexandrian, the Vatican and the Sinaitic Manuscripts, Greek versions of the Bible; early Saxon versions of parts of the Bible; wonderfully illustrated vellums of the Gospels. It holds a copy of the first collected edition of Mr. William Shakespeare's

David Low

TAKE Katherine Mansfield and David Low; each a child of New Zealand, each a genius. But Mr. McCormick gives pages to Katherine Mansfield, two lines to David Low. Why? Because Katherine Mansfield rose to the fulfilment of her genius in a series of stories which interpret and everlastingly illuminate the New Zealand of her childhood. David Low has done no such thing; his genius has found material that is not ours and works with an energy we cannot claim to have influenced. Perhaps, you may suggest, the caricaturist's free and vigorous satirical sense, his total want of respect for mere rank, place or title; perhaps he owes that to our bold, democratic tradition. Oh no, look round you; how deferential we are to the Honourable Tom Nobody, M.P., Minister of Bungling and Crayfishing, and how mealy-mouthed when we venture to criticise! If Low learned to mock and to prick windbags with his pencil anywhere in the Antipodes, it was in Australia, not here.—(J. H. E. Schroder in a discussion of E. H. McCormick's "Art and Letters in New Zealand," 3YA, February 18.)

Comedies, Histories and Tragedies; Milton's Paradise Lost; Bacon's Essays, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and it has the original manuscripts of many modern works, down to The Forsyte Saga of John Galsworthy. Magna Carta is there, but as it was fading in the light a facsimile is now shown. The Great Seals of England are to be seen, from Edward the Confessor to George the Fifth. The autographs include the first actual signature of a British monarch—Richard the Second—perhaps his predecessors could not write. King John did not sign, he sealed, the Great Charter; probably he could not write. With Henry the Eighth's letters are those of three of his six wives; Bishops Cranmer's and Latimer's, and Sir Thomas More's signatures. Letters by Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Francis Bacon, Oliver Cromwell, the Duke of Marlborough, George Washington, Captain Cook, Lord Nelson, General Gordon, Scott of the Antarctic, Burns, Thomas Hardy, Dickens—the whole pageant of English history passes before you as you read the autographs.—("The British Museum and its Reading Room," by Llewellyn Etherington, 1YA, March 2.)

Corporal Lampen

MY ambition is to be a Corporal one of these days for the simple reason that I don't want my brother in England to be the only one of our family to hold that distinction. Just before the war commenced he was the General Officer commanding the Royal Marines—now he is quite content to be a Corporal in the English equivalent of our Home Guard. Apart from their many duties, all the leaders in his particular group meet in conference once a week. My brother writes and tells me that his group is a typical one. It is made up of a schoolmaster, a country parson, the village blacksmith, a dentist, an innkeeper, two gamekeepers, a shopkeeper, a lawyer, a gardener, and a taxi driver. The voluntary meetzings are held in various places—one week in the gardener's potting shed, another in the village forge, and yet another might be held at the vicarage, and so on. The main thing is they are all good comrades. Speaking from what I've seen for myself in the last few weeks there is no reason why the same sort of thing shouldn't take place out here—for every mother's son of us feels that he is part and parcel of a new enterprise—and as such we want to establish it on firm foundations. To my way of thinking, comradeship is the corner stone of all such structures as these.—(From "Just Old Comrades," by Major F. H. Lampen, 2YA, March 13.)

