

# DID YOU HEAR THIS?

## Extracts From Recent Talks

### Doing Some Cloud Hopping

I WAS afraid to fly. Every time someone asked me to go up I had an excuse—wind, weather circumstances were happy in league with me until one day they all failed me, and here in New Zealand some years ago, I found myself unable to say "no," and ultimately in an open 'plane about to take off. Cheerfully my pilot said: "You have no need to worry, we will just do a straight ten minutes for your first flight." Up we went—never will I forget that first sensation, despite my teeth chattering with fear, yet I still could feel that marvellous thrill of leaving the earth for the first time. An emancipation of the soul—it was as if the body mattered no longer and one was free—free of all—free of the petty differences of the earth—out in God's good air and

floating away from one's own small old self into something bigger, better, cleaner, broader, fresher. Yes, in spite of my years I felt all that, and then I came back to the realisation. I had nothing between me and the ground and I just didn't like it. My hands froze on the side of the cockpit and my lips found their way between my teeth, the palms of my hands were moist—yes, I just was frightened. My pilot spoke to me, "Do you like it?" I grunted—speech was impossible, "Good," he said, "I'm glad, shall we do some cloud hopping? It will be a bit bumpy." Another inaudible grunt—"great!" he said, "you are a sport. We'll stay up twenty minutes since you like it so much." After what appeared a lifetime we came down.—(*"Why I Learnt to Fly,"* by Evelyn Gardiner, 2YA, April 2.)

### William Tell, Archer

THREE English outlaws made up their minds to go to London to ask a pardon of the king, and when the queen pleaded for the men, he granted it. The king had heard a good deal about these men's skill in shooting with the bow and arrow, so he went with them to a field to watch a display of their shooting. William of Clouesley first of all split in two a hazel wand at a distance of two hundred feet. After this, he bound his eldest son to a stake, put an apple on his head, and at a distance of "six score paces," or about one hundred yards, he split the apple in two with another arrow without touching the boy. The king was so delighted that he made William "a gentleman of fee," and his son was made a royal butler. This story was a great favourite with English people, and it was told with much gusto around the fire on winter nights. Then the story went to foreign parts—Norway, Denmark, and what we now know as Switzerland. All these countries boasted of their archer-heroes who shot apples in two on boys' heads without any injury to the boys. The story of William of Clouesley reached Switzerland, and became the story of William Tell. This English legend thus became better known in its Swiss form than in its original form.—(*From Ebor's Scrapbook*, 2YA Children's Hour, March 17).

### A New Literary Theme

"SOUTH RIDING" grew out of Winifred Holtby's interest in her mother's work on local bodies in Yorkshire; for Mrs. Holtby is a county alderman, like the admirable Mrs. Beddows in the book. The whole book is about local government, and how it impinges on the lives of dozens of ordinary families in the district she has called South Riding. Now, that's where I think Winifred Holtby has achieved some-

thing new and great in literature. You and I see a new road being made, a new bridge being built; we pay hospital rates; we lodge a complaint if there's a bad smell from a drain; we vote for a school committee; we idly observe the building of a block of municipal flats. And it never occurs to us that here, right in the midst of our daily lives, is the stuff of literature. But Winifred Holtby saw it. She looked, not at the new road or the new houses, but at the people who were being affected by them—the family who might have the joy of moving from a hovel to a clean new house; the landlord whose rents were being affected by municipal enterprise—and all the dozens of people who, to varying extents, feel the effects of a motion passed by a county council or other local body. "South Riding" is divided into eight parts, and each part is prefaced by an extract from the minutes of a committee of the county council of the South Riding.—(*"A Few Minutes With Women Novelists,"* by Margaret Johnston, 2YA, March 15).

### Dogs for Leading the Blind

IN England, there is an association known as Guide

Dogs for the Blind Association. The dog used for training to lead the blind is the Alsatian. This exceptionally intelligent breed of dog shows special aptitude for this type of work. Some two or three years ago, a broadcast appeal was made by the BBC for funds to assist in training Alsatis. This resulted in realising more than £750, enough to train nine dogs, for it costs about £80 to train each dog. When trained, they are absolutely reliable. A blind person can be lead about in perfect safety, through crowds and traffic. These fine dogs are trained with the utmost kindness. The trainer who commences the training, goes through to the end. No one is allowed to take over his work. Generally, after two or three months intensive training, the dog is ready for his job, and then it takes four to six weeks for the dog and the blind person to become accustomed to each other. The Alsatian is exceedingly



sensitive, and has wonderful hearing. Words of command are never shouted at him. The dog becomes very conscious of his duty, and develops a sort of understanding of traffic signals. A close attachment grows up between the dog and his blind friend, and they stick together through thick and thin. In one Continental city, there are about 180 of these dogs specially bred and trained for leading blind persons about the streets.—(*"Dog Guides and Guards,"* by Mrs. A. A. Spence-Clark, 3YA, March 14).

### The Fall of France

I HAVE been reading two books which attempt to assign the blame for the fall of France. One is a book called *Farewell France* by Oscar Paul, an Austrian journalist, who witnessed the overthrow of Austria before it was his fate to be present during the tragic days when the roads of France were covered with fleeing refugees. The other is a book called *The Traitor Class* by Ivor Montagu, the English journalist who draws many interesting and important parallels, which may not be as fresh as they should be in the minds of his readers, between the tragedy of France and what has happened in other times and other climes. Neither book can be regarded as complete in itself. We are far too close to the events dealt with to be able to examine them clearly and impartially, but we are so close that it is vitally necessary to examine them as well as we are able. Oscar Paul's book is a piece of vivid and

## The Deadly Road

BETWEEN now and Christmas, 6120 people will be killed, and 183,600 more or less seriously injured on the roads in Britain. That is on the basis of pre-war records. But the outlook now is much worse. It was estimated, on the pre-war basis, that every fourth or fifth child born in Great Britain was destined to be killed or injured in a road accident. The outlook here in New Zealand is similarly gloomy. That is, of course, assuming that the problem is tackled with no more seriousness than at present. Yes, the road is deadly. Road accidents are one of our major modern scourges. Now, what can be done about it? Nothing, did you say? I think you are mistaken. Between 1926 and 1929, road accidents in Edinburgh were reduced by over 40 per cent, thanks to the efficient work of road patrols and other enthusiastic and competent persons. During the same period, the road accident rate for Great Britain showed an increase of 50 per cent.—(*"The Deadly Road: What Psychologists Are Doing About It,"* by H. H. Ferguson, 4YA, March 25.)

dramatic journalism divided into four main sections—Background, War, Collapse, and Changed France. Its merit lies in the fact that it conveys a clear picture of the whole tragedy from the point of view of one who has only a journalist's claim to any inside story, but his treatment of the social background and the dominant personalities who played such a large part in the betrayal, should throw a light which was badly needed on many developments in recent history. Both Oscar Paul and Ivor Montagu come to much the same conclusion, although the former allots the blame to wider sections of the people—the conclusion is that France was destroyed by those who, because of their material interests, feared the people of France more than they feared their invaders. Not one book but both books should be read by all who are interested in one of the most significant betrayals of modern times.—(*Book Review* by Winston Rhodes, 3YA, March 18).

### When the Godwits Fly

BY keeping small finches, called juncos, in cages, Professor Rowan of Canada, found that if he could close out all the light from the cages and also have electric lights fitted inside the cages he could make the day appear to be of any length he wished. With some of the finches he made the days appear to become shorter and shorter and with others he made the days appear to become longer. The birds with the shortening days became quiet, whilst the birds with lengthening days began to sing and become very restless. He then



liberated the birds. The ones which were in the cages of shortening days flew away to the warmer South, whilst the ones of lengthening days flew towards the North although it was mid-Winter in Canada and so they flew to their doom. He thus showed that birds do not think about migration, they just set off when the days are of a certain length and they just cannot help it. Their ancestors have been flying along the same routes for many thousands of years, and so they possibly are flying along ocean routes where there was once land. The godwits do not all leave New Zealand on the same day, nor do they all leave from the same place—but it is quite possible that they all begin to move north at the same time, and so those nearest to Spirits Bay, in the far north, set off first for the Arctic. Farewell Spit at the north of the South Island is also another point of departure.—(*"The Habits of the Godwit,"* by George Guy, 3YA, March 21).