

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Svengali of the Ballet

DIAGHILEV was one of those men of abundant energy and artistic perception whose genius lies not in giving personal expression to art, but in inspiring artists. I think, having in mind the quite reckless nature of his undertakings—money was never an object, but it was always forthcoming from one source or another—and the hysterical atmosphere in which he and his gifted satellites worked, that I might call him the Svengali of ballet. In St. Petersburg, before ballet absorbed his interest, he edited a journal which, as some of you who are students of modern art will know, injected fresh life into Russian painting. He took Russian pictures on exhibition to Paris before he brought ballet thither; he gave Russian opera and Russian music to the European world. But ballet became his obsession, and one cannot wonder, reading of the first impact of this combination of several arts upon the west, that Paris went wild—usually with enthusiasm, occasionally, as in the case of Nijinsky's first appearance in "The Afternoon of a Faun," with rage and indignation. These were days when one might have seen Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky, Fokine, Ida Rubenstein, all appearing in the one programme—several in the one ballet. Balletomanes will sigh that we shall not see their like again; and others of us, who are less than initiates, will admit that they must have made extraordinarily attractive entertainment.—(*Book Talk by John Moffett, 4YA, April 2.*)

St. George's Day

IT was under the Banner of St. George that the glorious victories of Crecy (1346), Poitiers (1356) and Agincourt (1415) were won. At Agincourt Henry V. rallied his army with his cry of "God for Harry, England and Saint George." Admiral Sir Roger Keyes was commander of the Dover Patrol in the Zeebrugge on St. George's Day, 1918, Sir Roger gave the signal "St. George for England," and in the same war the battle of Ypres was fought on St. George's Day, 1915. St. George, patron of Christian soldiers and of English knighthood, stands for fearlessness in right against might, as champion of the oppressed, and great in the spirit of courage last war. When setting out for and devotion. His blood-red cross of sacrifice and suffering, on its ground of white for purity, in the strength of which he won, is seen wherever the Union Jack is flown throughout the world!—(*"This and That from 'Ebor's' Scrapbook," 2YA, April 21.*)



His Big Moment

THIS event took place during the tour of this country by the Prince of Wales. You will well remember that military parades were held in the four main centres, and at each of those functions the Prince made a point of shaking hands with as many returned soldiers as possible. At one of these parades an old Maori war veteran took his place in the long file of men. He was a very conspicuous figure, as he was wearing a scarlet tunic and black fur busby of an old volunteer regiment. As he passed, the Prince held him in conversation for a moment, and all the time the old warrior was shaking his hand up and down. At last the old fellow passed on and I got a word with him. There were tears in his eyes as he told me how proud he was at being singled out for special attention, and he further told me that it was the biggest moment in his long life. After the parade was over one of the Prince's A.D.C.'s told me that the old veteran told the Prince: "This has been a great day for me, sir. Only last week I lost my dear wife, but to-day has made up for every-

thing." I knew what the old soldier meant to say—so I think, did the Prince. The fact remains that the fine old warrior had experienced the "big moment" in his long and adventurous life. — (*"Just Big Moments," by Major F. H. Lampen, 2YA, May 1.*)

Labelled

A FRIEND of mine was holidaying in England when the London season was at its height, and the famous Derby race meeting was one of the early fixtures to take place. A friend of his, who was connected in some way with the High Commissioner's Office, told him that he could get him a ticket to see the races, and added that they would go together and make a day of it. Such an invitation was too good to miss, even though it meant that my friend had to hire clothing suitable for the great occasion.



On arrival at the course, his good Samaritan friend produced tickets that gave entry to a most exclusive enclosure. Next he produced a large circular medallion which he pinned on to the lapel of his coat and then wandered slowly round the enclosure. Here he noticed that everybody was wearing similar devices, and it appeared that if you wanted to know who a certain person was, you simply had to look at their telltale name-plate. Gradually it dawned upon him that quite a number of distinguished people were quizzing at him, some even going so far as to take their hats off to him. Not being accustomed to this sort of attention, he gradually worked his way to a secluded corner of the enclosure and inspected his own name-plate. You can imagine his surprise when he learnt that he was none other than the Rt. Hon. W. F. Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand. Surely a big enough moment for any man! It was too much for him, however, and after the next race he prevailed on his well-meaning benefactor to take him home. While waiting for the car to take him back to London, he began to realise that a Prime Minister's job was not

Schooling Long Ago

THE children of classical Greece went to school too. Maybe their lessons would appeal to you—they learnt no science, no foreign languages, practically no history or mathematics. There were just three subjects—letters, music and physical training. Physical training, consisting of running, jumping, wrestling and gymnastics, was given every afternoon after lunch. Other school lessons were taken in the morning. Always at sunrise you would see the boys on their way to school. The master sat in the middle of the room on a high chair while the boys stood round him or sat round him or sat on stools. He didn't write with white chalk on a black-board, but with black chalk on a white-board! Or should we call it a white blackboard? The boys practised writing on slates—only they weren't made of slate, but of wax, and could be smoothed over when they were to be used again. Later on the boys were allowed to use papyrus—the sort of paper that the Egyptians had, you remember? After school days were over, at the age of 18, all boys were given 2 years' strenuous military and naval training so that they would be ready to defend their city against hostile states.—(*"Children Through the Ages: Ancient Greece (2)" by "Ariel," 2YA Children's hour, April 2.*)

all that it was made out to be. Every policeman saluted him, as did every racecourse official, and his right arm worked overtime in doffing his hat (also hired for the occasion, by the way). In finishing his story he told me that his friend thought he was doing him a good turn, otherwise he would have worn it himself—knowing as he did, that the Prime Minister was spending the day many miles from the hub of the Empire.—(*"Just Big Moments," by Major F. H. Lampen, 2YA, May 1.*)

A Woman Writes About the Sea

I SUPPOSE all of us who love reading know that a warm, comfortable feeling of settling down to a book with the thought "This is a book after my own heart." I had it just recently, when I picked up a book I had read years ago, picked it up with the intention of flicking over the pages and recalling what it was about. But in no time I was deep in it, greedily devouring every word. I must confess that



a story of adventure at sea, especially in the days of sail, is for me "a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner." Give me a book about the China tea-clippers, or about piracy in the Spanish Main, and in no time I'm not in this world at all. So you can imagine the effect on me of a title like *Moonraker*, or *The Female Pirate and Her Friends*. And it's by a woman, F. Tennyson Jesse, one of three women who write supremely well about ships and the sea. How she gained her knowledge of ships, or what is the spring of her interest in them, I don't know, for nothing I know of her life connects her with the sea. Perhaps Tennyson Jesse learnt about ships much as I did—from books. But she writes about them like an old hand.—(*"A Few Minutes With Women Novelists: F. Tennyson Jesse," by Margaret Johnston, 2YA.*)

620 Miles Per Hour

WE are rapidly approaching a definite limit over which it will not be possible to go with the accepted type of aeroplane. An appreciation of the reason for this can be approached in the following way: Consider a machine something like a modern fighter, weighing about 2½ tons. In the light of established aerodynamic data, 1,000 horsepower will give such a machine a speed of 350 miles an hour. By doubling the engine power the speed will rise to 440 miles per hour. Trebling the power brings the figure to 500 miles per hour. Increasing the power output ten times to 10,000 horsepower results in a speed of about 620 miles per hour. In the foregoing, the engines have all been assumed to have the same weight as the 1,000 horsepower one. With the best of the existing materials and all the available knowledge with regard to engines, it would seem most improbable that we can hope for engine weights much lower than about one-half of a pound weight for each horsepower developed. Hence a 10,000 horsepower engine is not likely to weigh much less than 2½ tons, or the weight of the aeroplane we have been considering. So we have entered a vicious circle when the speed reaches about 620 miles per hour. Approaching another way, we again arrive at much the same result. The speed of sound in the sub-stratosphere, i.e., from 20,000 to 35,000 feet, is about 620 miles per hour. Known aerodynamic data shows that up to about 550 miles per hour the aeroplane virtually cleaves the air and experiences relatively little resistance, but as we approach the speed of sound an entirely different phenomenon begins to take place. Here the aeroplane has to be pushed against the air, which is unable to get out of the way except by brute force. Unless the developments in the control of atomic energy become practical, it can be said that we are not likely to see aeroplane speeds in excess of 620 miles per hour, although we shall approach this figure fairly soon.—(*Winter Course Talk, "The Future of the Aeroplane," by Professor T. D. J. Leech, 1YA, April 17.*)