

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Love's Young Dream

DO you know that Juliet was only thirteen when she had those impassioned love scenes with Romeo? This is clearly stated in the conversation between Juliet's mother (Lady Capulet) and her nurse in Act 1, Scene 2, of the play. I remember on one occasion giving a lecture to a Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Society on "The Heroines of Shakespeare." (I do talk about subjects other than Scotland, you know.) I mentioned Juliet's age and, emboldened by a gasp of suppressed excitement from the young ladies, I expressed the candid opinion that if a child of thirteen conducted herself in such a manner to-day, she would obviously need a dose of medicine and a sound spanking from her father! But, as a dour Scot, I have always been of the opinion that Shakespeare's heroines were altogether too young, and that Juliet, in particular, was nothing but a precocious youngster. It may be sacrilegious for a Scot to criticise Shakespeare, but I contend that if a child of thirteen were to take the part of Juliet on the legitimate stage to-day, the audience would gasp with horror. I even go so far as to say that, if it had been possible for Juliet to make love to Robert Burns, our national (and impetuous) bard would have been "dumfounert," and would have said in his amazement, "We'd better bide a wee, lassie!" My grievance against Shakespeare is that it would have been easy for him to add ten years to Juliet's age. No one would have been any the wiser, and my Presbyterian conscience would have remained quiescent.—(Talk by A. J. Sinclair, 12M, June 22.)



Preserving Wild Life

THE present position in New Zealand acclimatisation matters is briefly this: We have already considerable legislation designed to protect useful animals and plants, and to regulate shooting and fishing. In most districts acclimatisation societies are responsible for the actual administration of the law. This is done by ranging, by destruction of vermin or supposed vermin, by supplementary rearing of birds and fish, and, more recently, by attempts to restore habitat. That means not only by the provision of sanctuaries but by the saving of all possible plant cover and by the prevention of pollution of streams. It is a tall order and involves some problems which only research can solve. But it is only within the last five years that State provision has been made for continuous plant research and fish research. No special provision is made for a study of mammals and birds. In working to a solution of the New Zealand problem, we can find much that is helpful in the experience of other countries. In the United States of America a large Department of Biological Survey is maintained, and no fewer than 22 colleges and universities now provide four-year courses in wild-life management and conservation.—("Conservation of Wild Life," Dr. R. A. Falla, 3YA, June 17.)

King Solomon Played

IN the first century of this era, Fergus, the son of Roy, came over to Alba from Erin in search of Deirdre and Naos, and found them on the shores of Loch Etive, in Argyllshire. Fergus sent forth his famous war-cry, and its echo reached the tent where Deirdre and Naos were seated in front of a polished chessboard—a gift from King Conor. I became suspicious about this tale when I saw that reference to the chessboard in the copy now in the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, dated 1208 A.D. I had always thought that chess came to us from medieval times when knights and bishops were rather important in the scheme of things. But my

Everybody Served

IT is hard for us to realise, accustomed as we are to professional civil servants, how comprehensive and how unbureaucratic the Athenian administration was. Statistics are perhaps misleading, and cannot be very accurate here, but Dr. Warde Fowler's estimate may be interesting. He points out that of a population of about 30,000 citizens of Athens, in the age of Pericles, perhaps 1,400 would be employed yearly on the various boards, including the Archons or magistrates, the Strategi or generals, and the minor boards for the control of finance, religion, education, dockyards, etc. To this must be added the 500 for the Council, making a total of 1,900 out of the 30,000. I should point out that I have not included here the right of attending and voting at the Ecclesia or Assembly or at the Dikasteria or law-courts. So on these figures it was probable that every Athenian citizen at some time in his life would have some share in the administration of public business: it was his privilege as well as his duty to do so; and as far as we know, during the 5th century, B.C., it was a privilege eagerly accepted, at least by those who lived near enough to take advantage of it.—("The First Democracy," by Miss M. I. Turnbull, 4YA, June 17.)

suspicions were lulled when I discovered that the game of chess came originally from Hindustan. King Solomon, we are told, spent many leisure hours at his chessboard, and there are references in the sacred books of the East to the King of Ceylon enjoying a game of chess 4,000 years ago!—"Deirdre and the Sons of Usnach," by A. J. Sinclair, 12M, June 22.)

Children and Money

LISTENER: Is it a good plan to give money to a child?

Miss Dalton: Well, surely, it's reasonable to give a material reward for a task well done, and money is a very convenient form of material reward. It's also useful to start learning its value early in life, and only by experience does this come.



Listener: Well, if the money is a wage, not pocket-money, should Tom and Elaine be allowed to spend it entirely as they like. Is it theirs without any limits or tags?

Miss D.: Isn't money to be treated like any other power, whether it be climbing, reading or talking? Until taught by experience and by people, the children do not know how best to use it. Therefore, some form of guidance is necessary, and some limits set. But a considerable proportion should be theirs to experiment with, to make mistakes with, to learn with if you like, without any awkward questions being asked.—(Miss D. E. Dalton in "Conversations by the Fireside: The Place of Rewards," 3YA, June 16.)

We Now Live Longer

A: The risk of death has been very much reduced—through diseases, that is. I remember about 20 years ago hearing the great English surgeon, Lord Moynihan, say that, in 1821, in England, the expectation of life at birth for a female was 33 years—for

a male, 31. At that time, in 1921, the ~~old~~ expectation of life at birth for a female was 53 years, and for a male was 51 years.

B: That is, in 100 years, the expectation of life has increased by 20 years, nearly 66 per cent. Have you any idea how far in advance of primitive man we are in this matter?

A: I was reading an article last year which was written about the growth characters of the skulls of some neolithic adults, say, from five to ten thousand years ago, and the conclusion reached there was that none of the skulls was older than 25 years. So it does look as though, in a few thousand years up to 1821, the span of life was increased about a third and in the next 100 years the span of life was increased about two-thirds. I believe that recently, since 1921, the increase in expectation is still greater in proportion.

B: I expect it will become greater still, as methods of preventing diseases, as distinct from curing them, are further improved. That is, if we can produce a peaceful world and cut down the accident rate on the roads. One important aspect of prevention is the building up of the body's resistance.—("The Changing Bases of Society: Science and the Public Health," 3YA, June 11.)

Tussaud's Waxworks

WHEN I went to Madame Tussaud's I was directed toward a lady attendant who seemed to be much absorbed reading something. I asked her for a catalogue in vain—she was just one of the waxworks, and the joke was played on just as many of us as would go up to her to buy a catalogue. I remember someone directed me to a policeman. He had his back to us. I was to ask him where the catalogues were on sale—but that policeman was a waxwork, too! Of course, everybody laughed, because there was always a crowd who had been hoodwinked, and they wanted to gloat over a fresh victim. Some people, a few, that is, lost their tempers—but that was dangerous, because Madame Tussaud's is full of little traps. For instance, there were two nurses in the inquiry office, dressed exactly alike, both



with golden hair and pink and white complexions. One was alive and the other was a waxwork figure. But when you go to the exhibition for the first time and know nothing about these things, you're liable to fall in, as the saying goes.—(From "Ebor's" Scrapbook, 2YA, June 16.)

Painful Story of Musical Genius

THOSE of my listeners who are interested in music and musicians might like to read *The Young Cosima*. I can hardly say you might enjoy it. This book tells the story of Liszt's daughter, Cosima, and the famous musician and critic, Hans von Bulow, down to the moment when, after a long period of infidelity with Wagner, more or less condoned by her husband, she finally breaks away from von Bulow and her children, and goes off to join the great musician. The story is exceedingly painful, for von Bulow adored Wagner and devoted the best years of his life to his service. It depicts vividly the strange, wayward character of the great genius, and the atmosphere of jealousy, intrigue and passionate enmities and friendships that enveloped him. It is, in fact, an acute and sympathetic story of genius, especially musical genius, as displayed in the persons of Liszt, Wagner, von Bulow, and some lesser lights, and of the peculiar personality of Cosima—her unfortunate marriage, her relation to her beloved father, and the long conflict of loyalties in her soul while she wavered between her clever but ferocious husband and the stupendous erratic composer, to both of whom she seemed a necessary aid—in fact, neither of them could face life without her.—("A Few Minutes with Women Novelists: H. H. Richardson," Margaret Johnston, 2YA, June 7.)