

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Guardsmen

I SAW one scene on the quay of a South Coast port which still thrills me in recollection. The Guards had fought in Belgium as we expect the Guards to fight. There are people who sneer at the Guards because of their "fancy dress" uniform in peacetime. No one who ever fought beside the Guards ever sneered at them: certainly no one who ever fought against the Guards did! For eighteen days the Guards had marched, counter-marched and fought. They had undergone the ordeal of the beaches of Dunkirk, and had been bombed on the precarious crossing of the Channel. Yet the moment they had set foot in England, they fell in on the quay under perfect discipline, and marched off as calmly as

if they were going to relieve the guard at Buckingham Palace. It was more than a thrill. Here was a spirit which a hundred Hitlers could never break. These men would never know that they were beaten; therefore they never could be beaten by anything short of extermination. The sequel was even more significant. Lying about on the quay were a number of French soldiers. They were not merely fatigued, but dispirited—even demoralised: we could scarcely blame them. To us it seemed that we had lost France. I saw some of them stare in amazement at the Guards. One or two staggered to their feet, others followed. Then those Frenchmen fell in and marched behind the Guards. So can men of courage imbue others with their spirit.—(Bernard Newman in his recent book: "One Man's Year." Quoted from 3YA, August 12, by Miss G. M. Glanville).

Spring in the Desert

THE plants that loom large in the desert flora of the United States are those that by some special development of the root system or of the structure of the leaves are able to pick water up quickly and to store it against evaporation during the day. Such are the members of the cactus family, a group of plants confined to the American deserts. These are present in immense variety: the prickly pear with its rounded fleshy leaves; the giant sahuaro rising to a height of forty feet or more; the round barrel—cacti which when cut in half will yield enough water to give a man a drink. (Often enough it has proved a life-saver in this respect.) Then there is the sage—just like our garden variety, and just as fragrant. I shall never forget the scent of sage that filled the air when the transcontinental express set me down at 4 o'clock one summer morning in the Arizona desert a few miles from the Mexican border. A most amazing feature of the desert flora is the flowering of the desert in a wet spring, when such occurs. Millions of annuals come into a brief existence and flower in all the colours of the rainbow, while the cacti and other more permanent members of the desert flora also burst into bloom on a gorgeous scale.—("The American Landscape," Dr. F. J. Turner, 4YA, August 12.)

Yorkshire Pantomime

IN the excitement of getting off to the pantomime we never would eat a proper meal, with the result that by the time the pantomime started we were ravenous. Of course all this was a routine matter

with our elders, who produced all that was wanted in the refreshment line from a black bag. And all our eatables were topped off with an orange, as Stanley Holloway says, "one each a-piece all round." There was nothing unusual in seeing a gallery of hundreds of people eating away or sucking oranges. The cleaners must have blessed us the next morning when they tackled their job. But Yorkshire people were like that—feasts were the order of the day at christenings, weddings, funerals, and family parties of all kinds.—("Ebor," in Station 2YA's Children's Session, August 11.)

Strength

TWENTY years ago a concrete was considered good if it withstood a load of 2,000lbs. per square inch, whereas to-day 4,000 to 5,000lbs. per square inch is quite common, due to both the improvement in manufacture of cement and our better knowledge of how to make and treat concrete. Again our greater knowledge of the properties of iron and steel makes possible wonderful structural advances. The Forth Bridge with its central span of 1,600 feet is a striking tribute to the skill of the designer Sir Benjamin Baker, but the researches of the physicist and chemist have resulted in the production of steels of such strength and quality as to render possible the construction of the George Washington suspension bridge over the Hudson River with its span of 3,500 feet.—("Engineering," Cecil Dawson, Lecturer at Auckland University College, 1YA, August 14.)

Tail Story

AT one meeting Newman lectured to workers, and this is the yarn in appreciation of Yorkshiremen told by the organist of Ripon Cathedral: "Two Yorkshiremen found themselves out of work in a little American town. Someone gave them good advice. 'A circus is coming here next week. Now there is a cave in the hills with three lion cubs. If you can get hold of them, you can sell them well to the circus. Mind you, go while the lion isn't there, though.' So the two Yorkshiremen made for the cave. One mounted guard outside while the other entered to secure the three lion cubs. The cave was dark and he had difficulty in finding the cubs. 'What's blockin' the light?' he called to his mate outside. 'You'll know what's blockin' your light,' said the man outside, 'if this blankety tail comes off.'"—(Miss G. M. Glanville, reviewing Bernard Newman's book, "One Man's Year," 3YA, August 12.)



Totalitarian England

THERE was a strong tendency for the work of the government to pass from the fighting to the trading classes. Now the trading classes wanted above all things peace so that they could make money. They were prepared to pay hard cash, in the form of taxes and loans, and they could provide capable administrators for the king's service. Finally, they did not mind setting a despot over themselves—provided, of course, that he ruled generally speaking in their interests. The natural result of all this was the emergence of the Renaissance despot all over Europe. He deliberately destroyed the remains of the old medieval privilege; sometimes to set poor

Big Figures

THE earlier motor cars and aeroplanes were produced by a few men. This is apt to give a false impression of the magnitude of the work required to-day. Actually, one out of every ten employees of the aircraft industry must be an engineer, since the design of a modern large bomber requires the equivalent of 125 men working for one year at 40 hours a week. Again, in the construction of a medium sized tank about 25,000 blue prints are required, whilst the design of a modern battleship costs from £1,000,000 to £2,000,000 and involves drawings weighing tons.—("Engineering," Cecil Dawson, lecturer at Auckland University College, 1YA, August 14.)

men free, but more often to make room for new privileges for the rising merchant class. It was the destruction of the Church (or its close control by the state) which was the greatest triumph of this first great experiment in totalitarianism. England had gone totalitarian through fear of the barons and had stayed that way as a wartime precaution against the Spaniards. However, at its moment of greater strength, Tudor totalitarianism was never independent of popular support. It is very significant that on one of the few occasions that the government set itself against the interests of this middle class it failed completely; namely, when it tried to stop landlords enclosing their land in order to farm it according to modern and efficient lines. The process went on: for it put money into the pockets of those who should have been enforcing the prohibition.—(Professor F. L. Wood in 2YA's "Democracy" Series, August 18.)

Middle Class Rebellion

PARLIAMENT won the Civil War not because of popular support, but because of the financial strength of the bourgeoisie, and of the military genius and moral force of middle-class leaders like Cromwell. It was under the wing of Parliament that radical Englishmen developed extreme democratic theory. It was a Puritan Parliamentarian, Milton, who wrote a defence of free speech and a free press which is still quoted by crusaders for liberty. In short, when the English middle class broke with the king who had been their representative and spokesman, they did so in the name of the people's liberties. It was a group of deeply conservative and respectable bourgeois citizens who showed conclusively that a king was not demi-god, but a man like anybody else—for at least like other men, he had a head that could be cut off.—(Professor F. L. Wood, 2YA, August 18.)

Little Figures

RECENTLY there has been developed a method of finishing surfaces to a much higher degree of smoothness and accuracy than before. It is also claimed that the surface thus produced is harder and more resistant to wear. Such a surface is said to be super-finished. A surface which could commonly be regarded as dead smooth actually contains innumerable minute hills and hollows having a height or depth of many millionths of an inch. To-day we can measure these heights and depths from the true mean plane of the surface. If the surface is finished by the general method of grinding, the variations measure between 1 and 2 micro-inches, a micro-inch being one millionth part of an inch. If the surface is super-finished by the new method the hills are removed and only a few small valleys of from 1 to 5 micro-inches remain.—("Engineering," Cecil Dawson, lecturer at Auckland University College, 1YA, August 14.)