DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

A Small Roast of Beef

I HAD a New Zealand friend in Washington, who had only been married and living there a short time. She told me that after their honeymoon, when they were established in a flat, she decided to have a good typical New Zealand Sunday dinner. So she asked for a small roast of beef, about 3 or 4 pounds, but when it was wrapped up, and she was asked to pay 27/6, she nearly collapsed. She compromised with three pork chops, which was within the scope of her housekeeping allowance. She learnt, as I soon learnt, that the Americans didn't have roast of beef and roast legs and fore-quarters of lamb in the light-hearted way we do. They had more poultry, and far more made dishes. But the roast joint was very rare, and I don't wonder at that price. Once or twice, as a compliment to me as a New Zealand visitor, I was served with roast lamb, but I found my hostess had spent a reckless sum to get it. The Americans live well; they eat lots of salads; in fact the salad is a separate course with dinner, and they quite frequently make a lunch off a salad, but it is a very good and comprehensive salad. And you got a great many things served up in a cream sauce. One, which I came across rather too often, and did not like, was pressed beef, shaved very thin, and bedded down in this cream sauce. Oysters, mushrooms, brains, sweetbreads and other little odds and ends were treated in the same manner, and took the place of our hearty meat meal out here.—*("Shoes and Ships and Sealing-wax," by Nelle Scanlan, 2YA, July 29.)*

An "I Remember" Story

"NEBRASKA Coast" has no plot: it is a straightforward "I remember" story of the American move west, 80 years ago. The hero is John McDougall, farmer by calling, adventurer by genius, who took his wife and family from New York State to Nebraska, round about 1860 . . . They become the central figures in a sort of panorama of pioneer life and character. There are comic episodes, such as that of Professor Lewis and his great rain-making bombs; there are dark and terrible ones, such as that in which McDougall rescues a murderer from a lynching party. But it wouldn't surprise me if you were to enjoy most of all the continuous background against which these episodes stand out—a background filled with minor but typical Nebraskans, whose speech, anecdotes, and reminiscences seem to bring an age to life. Mr. Davis says he has greatest reason to thank his father, whose talk ran wide over those times and his partners in them. Mr. Davis has known how to use his father's memory: it almost might be his father's eyes and voice.—*(From a review of Clyde Davis's "Nebraska Coast," by J. H. E. Schroder, 3YA, August 5.)*

America's War of Independence

EVEN though the war was regrettable and avoidable, it did produce good results for both sides. The Americans had fought in the name of self-government. They didn't fight for democracy, because democracy meant very little then. But, the ideals they espoused were fundamentally democratic, and later on they were developed in such a way as to give the world one of the great democracies of all time. Jefferson's Declaration expressed the ideas of the future in words which have everywhere become an accepted part of the democratic faith: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Thus did the War of Independence lead in a democratic direction. And Britain too, understood its lesson. From this bitter experience her statesmen learned how they should treat their kinsmen overseas. They had taken a hard blow, and they were not going to risk another. Sixty years after the Declaration of Independence, the famous Durham Report laid it down that principles of tolerance, of co-operation, of self-government were to regulate future relations of the Mother Country and her colonies. You can see what happened from our own case in New Zealand. It was only a bare fourteen years after the Treaty of Waitangi when Britain granted us responsible self-government; and the European population of these islands was then a mere 30,000. New Zealanders did not have to fight for these rights. The Americans had already won that battle of them.—*("Democracy Through the Ages, The American War of Independence," by Professor Leslie Lipson, 2YA, August 25.)*

The Coward Controversy

SO many people I have spoken to seem to feel strongly about Mr. Coward—as he would like them to, no doubt. They are likely to become exercised at the mere mention of his name, one school declaring that they considered him a "wash-out," the other that he was all an entertainer should be. The truth is I neither saw him nor heard his concerts, so all I can say to those who did not enjoy them is that they were rather simple, weren't they, to go along expecting him to sing like Caruso, or Harry Lauder if you like, when we have heard his records for years and should know that his singing voice is a mere tuneful quaver. I don't know what these people thought he would do—acrobatics, perhaps, or female impersonations. The point rather seems to be that what Mr. Coward attempted was to amuse his audiences by singing as best he might some of his own and other people's songs of a certain—shall we say—sophisticated type, and introducing them to a personality that London and New York, and for all I know, Wigan also, find engaging. It is in some sense notable that so popular a writer should be prepared to perform at all. All most of them can do in person is to roar when the circumstances are propitious.—*(Review of Noel Coward's "Australia Visited, 1940," by John Moffett, 4YA, August 6.)*

Strong Man of Iran

WHEN we consider the present state of Iran, we have to read it in the life of one man. Reza Kuli was born in 1878 in a castle on Mt. Alashat, not far from the shores of the Caspian Sea. He came of a warrior family and sycophants of to-day have traced his descent back to King Darius. Reza was brought up accordingly, studying the Koran closely in his youth, and then taking service in the Persian Cossack Brigade, which had been established for the old Shah by Russian officers. In his 30's, when it became necessary to pawn the imperial palaces and parks to pay interest on foreign loans, Reza became profoundly convinced of the need of political reforms. Russia and Britain had now spheres of influence in Persia, and an American financial expert was engaged to bring the national budget to order. In the last great war Persia was the helpless stamping ground of foreign agents. Reza, meanwhile, had been gaining experience in constant operations against rebellious tribes. On one of his visits to the capital he came into touch with a political leader Zia ed Din, who persuaded him that by intervening in politics he could save the country. Early in 1921 he led his brigade to Teheran and after a bloodless coup d'etat he was himself appointed Commander-in-Chief and he made Zia ed Din premier. Later he became unresisted dictator, and, inspired no doubt by the example of Kemal Pasha, entered upon a broad programme of reforms which in a few years put the country in a very different condition.—*(From a talk on Iran by Dr. Guy Scholefield, 2YA, August 26.)*

The Work Of Extremists

BUT, on both sides of the Atlantic the issues between England and America were accentuated by a small, extremist group. In Britain, the King and his Ministers took a high and mighty tone, and wouldn't make the necessary concessions. Instead of concessions, they favoured a policy of coercion. Then, when coercion failed—we know that it usually does fail—they did offer some concessions; but, of course, they did it too late. On the American side, fiery writers and speakers like Patrick Henry and Sam Adams were dwelling on every grievance they could find. When the King tried coercion they advocated resistance. When resistance succeeded, and the King offered concessions, they increased their demands. Both in Britain and America, there were moderate and statesmanlike men who thought that the gulf could easily be bridged. Edmund Burke, the great orator, spoke in favour of conciliation; and on the American side, such a man as Benjamin Franklin put forward proposals which could have saved the day. Even when the Americans voiced their grievances, what they asked for at first was not independence but guaranteed political rights within the empire. In effect, they wanted in the eighteenth century something like the Dominion status which we enjoy in the twentieth. As late as autumn in 1775, the legislatures of five colonies passed resolutions against independence, and even in January, 1776, the king's health was being toasted each night in the officer's mess where Washington presided.—("Democracy Through the Ages: The American War of Independence," by Professor Leslie Lipson, 2YA, August 25.)

Bachelor and Spinster Taxes?

FIELD: Now, Dr. Falla, what economic changes do you consider likely or desirable? I want to hear what you think about such proposals as bachelor and spinster taxes; direct payment to wives out of the earnings of industry; special housing facilities for parents of large families. Do you think any of these are practicable or desirable?

FALLA: s. Some of them are practicable, and most of them are desirable. I think the first and most important principle is that the extent of a person's family responsibility should be taken into account in determining what share of goods and services she should receive. The Bachelor and Spinster Tax is perhaps of negative rather than a positive appeal, and methods of direct assistance are to be preferred for psychological reasons. There is already provision for family allowance under Social Security legislation in New Zealand, and some exemption in income tax for each dependant child, while wages awards are often based on the needs of an average family. It is an important question. Women and dependent children make up about half of any census return; statistics show that the death-risk to mothers is still higher than to miners or similar dangerous occupations.—*("The Changing Bases of Society," a discussion between Professor H. E. Field and Dr. R. A. Falla, 3YA, August 20.)*