

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Spirit of the Mountains

THERE remains something which I find very difficult to say. Apart from the mere scenic value of the alps which is the main theme of the painter, and the main attraction to the tourist, who may see all he wants without getting out of his car, there is that vague thing which



may be called the spirit of the mountains, the spirit which inspired Wordsworth and so many other great poets. I shall not attempt to describe or analyse it here. It is something which makes a powerful appeal to

the depths of our nature, something which is not communicable in words, which can only be felt; something, in short, which is sacred and most profoundly inspiring. Here and there in my own published verses I have tried to express something of it, with what success it is not for me to say; but I do feel strongly that the language of prose could never do justice to the thing I speak of, and that, if anything of it can be conveyed in language at all, it must be in that of poetry. From this point of view the Alps are seen to be a great and priceless possession. If we could plane them away with some gigantic tool we should gain economically, but we should lose, in my judgment, far more than we should gain.—(*"The Alps from End to End."* Professor Arnold Wall, 1YA, April 9.)

Use Your Heart Discreetly

DON'T get into a panic if your doctor tells you that you have some form of heart trouble. Few people realise the wonderful service they can get from an impaired heart by using it discreetly. The heart is a remarkably adaptable organ, and many of those with heart disease can, and do, lead useful and productive lives, with very little restriction of their normal activities, by following their doctor's advice. Let me suggest one cardinal rule for those who are in the forties and over. That is, moderation in everything. Don't forget that, with plenty of rest and sensible exercise, the old heart will tick over sturdily for years. And, don't forget, either, that little tip about a spot of relaxation during business hours.—(*"Public Enemy No. 1."* 2YA, April 15.)

Present and Past

BUT it is not only the living that "get you." It's not just seeing Duncan Grant, the painter, dash up his steps two at a time with a loaf of bread in his hand. Or Epstein cross the road from his home in Guildford Street to post a letter. It's not just having a hair-trim in the tiny French place in Queen's Road and recognising Edith Sitwell pay-

ing at the desk for her manicure and slipping off to her flat round the corner. London is inhabited as much by the Past as the Present. I have been there a week perhaps. I leave my studio room in Charlotte Street and dash round the corner to the little bakery before it closes. I am arrested by a small house wedged among others but with a beautiful window—arched and perfectly proportioned. It's width is the width of the house. It is a story high. I cross the road. And in the dusk I read the small blue medallion set there by the London County Council. "Thackeray's House." I look dazedly at the hurrying little street. Thackeray. Not to-day, Douglas Reed and *Insanity Fair*, but yesterday, Thackeray with his *Vanity Fair*. The bread shop has shut. I have no bread. I have slipped back nearly a century.—(*"My London."* Alison Grant Robinson, 2YA, April 15.)

An Explorer in Skirts

SO off Mary Kingsley went, to present to tropical Africa the curious spectacle of an upright English woman in the long skirts of the 'nineties (though we are told she wore underneath a pair of her brother's trousers, but how hot!) and perched on her head—a cork



helmet? No! A shady straw hat? No! A large felt sombrero? No!—of all things, a little fur cap! As an excuse for going among the tribes she went as a trader, and she really did trade. And how comically

she relates her adventures! She never seemed specially concerned when her canoe overturned in some crocodile-infested river or swamp, though I marvel how she ever dragged herself out with skirts clinging round her. Yet she was glad of those skirts when she fell some fifteen feet into a grave-pit. "Had I adopted the advice of many people in England," she says, "and adopted masculine garments, I should have been spiked to the bone and done for. Whereas, save for a good many bruises, here was I with the fullness of my skirt tucked under me, sitting on nine bony spikes some twelve inches long, in comparative comfort, howling lustily to be hauled out." One of her natives fell in a little later, and not having a skirt, got "a good deal frayed at the edges" as she expressed it.—(*"Some Adventurous Women."* Margaret Johnston, 2YA, April 11.)

Profits and Principles

AT the roots of American history is a dualism, and it has run right through the life of the United States up to our own time. We're all familiar with the modern United States as the home of giant industrial undertakings. We know

of America's natural resources, of her huge corporations, of her skilled workers. American efficiency and enterprise are often thought of as business efficiency and business enterprise. And some people who look only at this side of American life call its civilisation a materialistic one. But there's another side, just as important and just as characteristically American. The United States abounds in a tremendous store of idealism. It has a strong attachment to principles. It will turn enthusiastic for a cause, and its citizens can be roused even to a crusading spirit. These two tendencies are intertwined in American democracy.—(*"The Birth of a Nation."* Professor Leslie Lipson, 2YA, April 13.)

Elizabeth's Silk Stockings

THE first person to wear a pair of silk stockings in England was probably the boy king Edward VI. Up to the time of Henry VIII, hose were made of ordinary cloth. The king's own stockings were made out of yard-wide taffata. As most of you know, the king was a very big man. Not many of you know that he had a skin disease and he would need softer hose that would not chafe his skin. So he had special stockings made, possibly to save him irritation. His son, Edward VI., received as a present from Sir Thomas Gresham "a pair of long Spanish stockings." For some years after, silk stockings continued to be very rare in England. In the second year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, her silk woman, Mistress Montague, presented Her Majesty with a pair of black knit silk stockings for a New Year's gift. These, after a few days' wear pleased the Queen so much that she sent for Mistress Montague, and asked her where she got them, and if she could find her some more. The silk woman answered: "I made them very carefully, on purpose only for Your Majesty, and seeing those please you so well, I will presently make some more." "Do so," replied the Queen, "for indeed I like silk stockings so well, because they are pleasant, fine, and delicate, that henceforth I will wear no more cloth stockings." And from that time to her death the Queen never wore cloth hose, but only silk stockings.—(*"The Junior Encyclopædia of the Air."* 2YA, April 6.)

Robust Fiction

"MO Burdekin" is rich, robust fiction. In the remote Queensland township where the founding hero grows up, gold prospectors jostle the shepherds and shearers from the runs, a medley gang, rough and picturesque, and well matched—if motleys match—by the oddities of store and pub. I wouldn't vouch for the strict accuracy of every detail and every dab of colour in this view of life on the Burdekin 70 years ago, but I do vouch for this, that it's a lively pleasure to meet Mrs. Sweeney of the Royal Rose, bursting in from the kitchen "buttonless with excitement," or Miss Hymovitch, who plies the curling tongs in a frenzy, burns off her fringe, and comes to the table smelling like a bush fire, or Gramma, who likes to tell people what mutton does to her stomach.—(*From a review of "Mo Burdekin,"* by Sarah Campion, broadcast by J. H. E. Schroder, 3YA, April 14.)

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Mothers



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