DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Such Sweet Sorrow

BUT that is one thing about gardening; it builds character. Its chief element is struggle—the pitting of man's cunning against ruthless caterpillar and rapacious wireworm; the indomitable determination to make two parsnips grow where only one grew before — and that one fatally punctured by wood-bugs. The gardener is a stout soul. He has to have the will to conquer in spite of drought, flood, frost, sparrows, cats, and the neighbours' fowls. Even while he's sowing his seeds the sparrows are lined up on the fence waiting to blitz them as soon as he takes his eyes off them. What they leave the cats scratch up; and if any refugee seedlings do poke their faces above ground, the neighbouring fowls get through the fence and outflank them. Then there's the weather. Anything that needs lots of sun withers from frost-bite. Plants which depend for life on lashings of rain, fold up in the usual dry spell. Tall plants take the count in gales and short plants get washed away in cloud-bursts. If Shakespeare had thought of it he could have written "Gardening is such sweet sorrow."—*("Come Into the Garden, Maud!": Ken Alexander, 2YA, May 29).*

Packing Fruit

DURING the fruit season, which lasted nearly five months, we led very busy lives. The whole family would be packing and weighing fruit, each fruit, excepting plums, being wrapped in tissue paper. Visitors, too, enjoyed giving a hand and often in the holidays university students would be glad to come and help. We also employed from six to 12 coloured women and girls to pack—that was when our farm was really going. Delightfully healthy work it was, and a cheerful spirit which resulted from doing congenial and useful work in common among sweet scents and sounds pervaded the packing shed. The coloured girls worked well and liked the work, so that it was often difficult to get a cook during the first season, for often my coloured cook would depart at the beginning of the fruit season to pack fruit for someone else, and so I would have to desert the packing shed for the more arduous work of the kitchen.—*("Life on a Cape Fruit Farm," prepared by Madeline Alston, 2YA, June 1).*

Did Kipling Write Poetry?

IT is a common thing for people to say that Kipling's verse is not real poetry. If read side by side with the work of any half dozen leading poets of to-day or yesterday it stands out as being so simple and so easily understood that the shallow thinker cannot believe it is poetry. Most poetry, we must admit, is inclined to be obscure in its meaning. Eliot comments: "We expect to have to defend the poet against the charge of obscurity, but we have to defend Kipling against the charge of excessive ludicity. We expect a poet to be ridiculed because his verse does not appear to scan; but we must defend Kipling against the charge of writing jingles. People are exasperated by poetry which they do not understand and contemptuous of poetry which they understand without effort." He says that what is unusual about Kipling's ballads is "his singleness of intention; he never attempts to convey more to the simple mind than can be taken in at one reading or hearing. They are best read aloud, and the ear requires no training to follow them easily."—*(Review of T. S. Eliot's "A Choice of Kipling's Verses," by Dr. G. H. Scholefield, 2YA, May 28.)*

Family Party

THE Mozart party consisted of Leopold Mozart, the father, Mrs. Mozart, his wife, Nannerl, a little maiden of 12, and Wolfgang, a young boy of eight. In Paris, they had often been carried to Court in three sedan-chairs—but we do not hear of this happening in London. Buckingham Palace was a smaller, homelier building than the present one, and it suited well the homely life of George III. and his Queen. It was not in the least like Versailles, or any palace the Mozarts knew. It was all so unpretending and so intimate. They found the King there, and his brother, the Queen and her brother, and the two Princes; a little family party. For three hours they made music, and Wolfgang was kept hard at it. They placed all the music they could find before him, all of which he read off with the greatest ease; he played the King's organ; he accompanied the Queen in a song; and finding the bass part of a Handel air lying about, he proceeded to improvise a melody upon it which took away all that remained of the royal breath.—*("They All Went to London," 2YA, May 29).*

On a Destroyer

HAVING been warned to hang on tight however interested, I was saved by the rail from falling headlong, when at the ring of a bell one of the men swung a lever and the ship heeled over at the same time in the most alarming manner. To my amazement, not one of the men in view even moved a step out of place, although not one was holding on to anything that I could see. Then there came another lurch, and we heeled over the other way. I began to wonder whether my normally good tummy would stand many more shocks when to my great relief, my husband came back and asked me if I would like to go back to the bridge and see what was causing the lurches as they would be doing some more. Getting from the rail to the ladder, I managed to climb up without any help at all, and got to the main deck just in time to see another destroyer not very far off, apparently intent on ramming us, anyway she was coming straight for us. It was a completely paralysing sight, so much so that the scream that I tried to give never arrived and then I was grateful, for I saw that she was actually going to pass very close astern. — *("A Woman in an Engine Room." Mrs. O. Gerard, 2YA, April 17.)*

Vision of Empire

IT is a fundamental point in Sir John Pratt's examination of Japanese policy that for a much longer period than we usually recognise, the interests of Japan and of Great Britain and the U.S. have been diametrically opposed—for the last 35 years in fact. The signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 he considers one of the great turning points in history, though it passed with little notice being paid to it. We can deplore the failure of the Western world to see the significance of it, in opening up a new conception in Japan of the destiny that a virile nation might consider within its reach, but that is probably a more idle exercise than pondering upon the flight principle of angels. The Alliance *was* signed, to the immediate advantage of both Japan and Great Britain, and one of its first results was the Japanese defeat of Russia in 1904-5, which removed a danger to the interests not only of Japan but of Great Britain also, of interference in the Far Eastern set-up. But beyond this point the interests of Great Britain and Japan were soon divided. The Japanese, inspired, as we have seen, with the vision of Empire, returned to their old dream of hegemony in East Asia.—*("Japan And the Modern World," reviewed by John Moffett, 4YA, June 3).*

From North to South

IF you look at this period of Reconstruction from some points of view, the attitude of those Northern leaders was understandable; and some of the things they tried to do were good. They wanted the negroes to enjoy the privileges to which they were entitled as human beings; and they wanted the highly-conservative social system of the Old South to be liberalised and democratised. Some of these military governments that were set up in the South did introduce progressive measures based on Northern examples. The evil of land aggregation was checked to some extent. A great number of small holdings were created. Schools were instituted for the coloured population. Northern capital began constructing factories in the South, particularly for textiles. But unfortunately, whatever good they tried to do was offset by the methods they employed.—*("A Survey of American History," Professor Leslie Lipson, 2YA, May 25).*