

SNIPPETS FROM TALKS.

Great Writer Who Never Grew Up

"Jamie" Barrie Had His Early Successes Plagiarised—Central Control of the Mounted Police—The Effects of Depreciated Currencies—Home is a Good Landfall.

DONALD COWIE (3YA).

IT has been said that James Barrie made £300 at freelancing during his first year in London. There is no reason to doubt this statement. The young man didn't have to woo success long once he had established himself in the London of his ambitions. His first publications, "Better Dead," "Auld Licht Idylls and Edinburgh Eleven," "A Window in Thrums," "My Lady Nicotine" and "The Little Minister," all issued about 1890, aroused much critical interest, and brought young Barrie considerable fame. He and Rudyard Kipling, whose best short stories were published about the same time, were greeted as the rising hopes of English literature. Indeed, Barrie's stories of lowly Scottish life became so popular that a host of lesser writers sought to imitate them, with the result that for a short time there was a positive boom in what was derisively termed "the kailyard school."

THOUGH he has never grown up, Barrie has always been a shrewd Scotsman. The ridicule which was heaped by critics upon his imitators was carefully noted by Barrie himself, and in this way he reached the opinion that the novel was not an ideal medium for the expression of his genius. In 1892 he wrote, and had performed at a Strand theatre, a farcical comedy in three acts called "Walker, London," which met with a favourable critical reception; and it was evidently at this time that he came to the conclusion that he could present his ideas in dramatic form better than he could in fiction. In the next few years he acquired useful practice in the writing of one or two minor dramatic pieces; and in 1897 the production of his first important play, "The Little Minister," definitely settled it. "The Little Minister" was so successful that Barrie, the playwright, was a foregone conclusion.

LITTLE "Jamie" Barrie, the boy who has never grown up, does not live in a bald statement of biographical facts and figures. He is a curious and lovable character—undoubtedly the most curious literary figure and the most lovable public man of our time. If you met him walking along the Strand to-day, a little insignificant fellow, unpicturesquely dressed in Ulster turned-up soft hat, with walking-stick clasped in his hands behind his back, you would be lucky if you recognised him. That is Barrie's essential quality—elusiveness. I have pondered over this matter for a considerable while, and my conclusion is that the only way to know the real Barrie is to forget about conventional facts and re-read that story in "Margaret Ogilvy" where the playwright describes how, when his mother was sad because of the loss of his brother in tragic circumstances, he tried to

make her laugh. Here are his words: "I suppose I was an odd little figure. I have been told that my anxiety to brighten her gave my face a strained look and put a tremor into the joke



(I would stand on my head in the bed, my feet against the wall, and then cry, excitedly, 'Are you laughing, mother?'), and perhaps what made her laugh was something. I was unconscious of, but she did laugh suddenly now and then, whereupon I screamed exultantly to that dear sister who was ever in waiting to come and see the sight, but by the time she came the soft face was wet again."

MR. G. M. KEYS (3YA).

MUCH of the success of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police lies in its central control; mistakes have come largely when that control has been interfered with; to-day it remains strong. At headquarters in Ottawa is located the Commissioner, commanding the work and seeing that it is good. His dictatorship is qualified only to the extent of his being responsible to the Minister of Justice, which office is almost invariably held by a man sympathetic, far-seeing and proud of the present work. The work at headquarters is divided among several branches, including the C.I.B. (Criminal Investigation Bureau), and the remainder of the Dominion of Canada is divided into ten divisions, and these in turn are broken up into sub-districts comprising 112 detachments, widely spread and varying greatly in size. The force has never been large in numbers—a matter of several hundred men to patrol the greater part of a Dominion almost as large as Europe. That is why the records tell so frequently of exploits performed by one or two men where many times their number would seem no more than adequate. They represent all that are available, and their courage and sense of duty must make up for lack of numbers.

ON one occasion in the early days the deportation of a troublesome tribe of Indians had been ordered by the U.S.A. Government. A cavalry troop of considerable size escorted them to the border, where, they had been informed, the escort then would be taken over by the N.W.M.P. Early one morning they reached the border and a Mountie reported to the captain of the cavalry troop. "Good morning, sergeant," was the greeting. "Where are your men?" "My men?" replied the sergeant, some-

what puzzled. "Oh, he's over there cooking the breakfast."

LEICESTER WEBB (3YA).

WHY have so many countries abandoned a monetary system which had such great advantages? The answer is to be found in the very heavy fall in prices which occurred after 1929. I want you to consider for a moment the effect of a fall in prices in any given country upon industry and trade. Suppose you are a manufacturer of boots, and the price of boots in the open market falls by one-third. If you are still to continue making the same profit as before on each pair of boots it will be necessary to reduce the cost of manufacture of each pair by one-third. But perhaps you will find that it is not at all easy to reduce most of your costs of production. The principal item will be labour; but you can't go straight to your men and say, "I'm sorry. The price of boots has fallen, and you will have to take less pay." They will retort that their wages are governed by an award, and that you can't impose cuts of your own free will. The labour cost in manufacturing is, then, fairly rigid. Wages will come down eventually as the result of a fall in prices, but eventually may mean a year or more. Other costs are even more rigid. As a manufacturer you probably have to pay a fixed rate of interest on some of your capital. A fall in prices means an increase in the value of money, so that the burden of this interest charge is heavier than it was before. But you can't just go to the debenture holders and say to them, "The money you get as interest is worth more than it used to be, so I will even matters by giving you less." They will reply that a contract is a contract, and that you must pay the full rate of interest.

IT is perhaps unnecessary to explain to you why depreciation of a currency helps industry. Let me, however, refer again briefly to the case of boots. When the currency is depreciated or devalued it takes more of it to buy a pair of boots, so that prices rise. But the workers in the boot factory and debenture holders are still paid the same nominal amount, so that overhead costs are less. To put the matter in a nutshell, a depreciation of the currency benefits all who owe money, or employ labour, or who are in any way engaged in producing goods. It makes poorer all who are paid wages or who draw interest on money they have lent. Depreciation is, of course, a breach of contract, and on that account, a bad thing. But there are worse disasters in life than a breach of contract. One is a heavy decline in production with its inevitable accompaniment of poverty and unemployment. It is in order to prevent this decline in production that practically the whole