

OUTBURST OF FORMER N.Z. MEDICAL MAN

Fierce Invective Launched Against Britain And The Empire

ASTONISHING book called "The Decline and Fall of the British Empire," has just been published by Simon and Schuster, American publishing house. Its author is well known in New Zealand medicine.

The most vehement book of the year, it consists of 263 pages of denunciation of England and all things English, her politics, smugness, selfishness, morals—even her birth rate.

Author of the book, Robert Briffault, was a student at Otago University medical school, Dunedin, some 40 years ago.



ROBERT BRIFFAULT.
Former Otago University student.

How English reviewers, with their manner of fixed agreeable tolerance towards American books attacking England, will take "Decline and Fall" will never be known, since it will not be published in England.

Author Robert Briffault is already famous in the literary world for a brilliant best-seller novel "Europa."

Born in London 62 years ago, he studied and practised medicine in New Zealand, about 1897.

Noted Wellington medical man told the "Record" that he well remembered Briffault in his student days.

"Briffault was a striking looking man of a good deal of reserve," said the medical man, "and different in his ways from the other students."

"He was older than his fellow students, very clever and vivacious when you got to know him. His few intimates were very much attracted by him."

Briffault was a very clever talker, he said; would tell the others various experiences in his

life. He was rather original in outlook and a man who thought along different lines from most of his contemporaries in the university.

On ordinary questions Briffault had rather a French outlook, approaching questions from the unorthodox angle.

Said the medical man: "He had the French logic which to the English—not so logical but with commonsense and insular shrewdness—makes many French arguments seem so convincing that you feel there must be a flaw in them somewhere."

Briffault served in the war, was twice decorated by Britain. When the Munich Pact was signed, he returned his decorations to the King.

One American reviewer says: Under its grand title and despite isolated passages of startling invective, "The Decline and Fall of the British Empire" seems petty, and its criticism is so indiscriminating that readers may fear Briffault would not like the English even if they were good.

Dunedin's Old 400 At A Xmas Party

DUNEDIN does not forget its old folk at Christmas time. Every year the United Women's Guild gives a Christmas party for the old people. This year over 400 were entertained in the Early Settlers' Hall.

Bill-of-fare included a huge Christmas cake, which was cut and shared among all those present. Santa Claus arrived, and everyone of those ageing persons received a gift. Oldest present was Mrs. White, of Cumberland Street, who is just reaching her 95th birthday.

Some of the brightest of Dunedin's amateur talent entertained with song, patter and musical interludes. Jill and Peter of 42B were among the artists who assisted in making the party a memorable one for Dunedin's "old 400."



★ Speaker in an entertaining programme from the BBC recently was Wellington's Evelyn O'Brien (left), who is pictured here with her sister Kathleen. Evelyn, who, like her sister, has been playing hostess in one or two of England's biggest hotels, spoke on "Behind the Scenes in an Hotel." Although it was the first time she had broadcast (she is a sister of Bryan O'Brien, of 22B) she spoke without notes and was warmly commended by the radio officials. (Photo by Spencer Digby.)

WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS BALLET COMPANY OPENS IN AUCKLAND EARLY FEBRUARY



Here are three of the stars—Irina Baronova, the prima ballerina, Tamara Grigorieva, world-famous danseuse, and Anton Dolin, leading British exponent of the ballet.

AFTER some weeks of indecision it is now definitely announced that the Covent Garden Russian Ballet company, which has been playing in Sydney and Melbourne since September, will open a New Zealand season at His Majesty's Theatre, Auckland, on Wednesday, February 1.

This company, probably the most expensive to visit the Southern Hemisphere—expenses amount to £3000 a week—is headed by Anton Dolin and Irina Baronova, and its repertoire includes all the famous Diaghileff ballets, as well as ballets arranged by such outstanding modern choreographers as Lifar, Massine and Nijinska.

Christopher Robin And The Spaniel Did It

How A. A. Milne Met Right Composer

FATE seemed destined to bring the author, A. A. Milne, and the composer, Harold Fraser-Simson, together. They were both members of the same club, they lived opposite one another in Mallord Street, Chelsea.

Possibly most important of all, Christopher Robin and Mr. Henry Wiggins (Fraser-Simson's very intelligent spaniel) became great friends.

Interest in A. A. Milne's poems came years after Fraser-Simson's spectacular successes with his musical plays, "The Maid of the Mountains" and "The Southern Maid."

It never occurred to the composer to suggest that his friend Milne's poems should be set to music.

But, after the publication of "When We Were Very Young," toward the end of 1924, letters began to pour in on Milne asking permission to set this or that piece to music. Some composers—one or two well known—went farther. They set some of the poems to music, and then asked permission to publish the songs. It was this which brought Fraser-Simson on the scene.

Milne asked him to look through this manuscript music, but he declined, according to his rule, lest he might unintentionally get ideas from unpublished manuscripts. Milne then sought Fraser-Simson's advice about this new aspect of affairs which suddenly became quite a formidable one.

Fraser-Simson told him that he thought the poems ought to be set by one person, because if Mrs. Smith, of Chicago, did one and Mr. Brown, of London, did another, and so on, they would always be quite separate songs, and consequently would never be worth anything, whereas if one person set them, they could be published collectively. The upshot of all this was that Milne asked Fraser-Simson to undertake the task, which he readily agreed to do.

Most of the settings to the fourteen songs in the first volume "came to" Fraser-Simson in the evenings of a holiday in Scotland, after he had been out shooting all day. Some of them occurred in London while he was walking in the street. The street was the only

place in which he found he could satisfactorily set "Lines and Squares."

In order to get the proper lift, Fraser-Simson did what every child does—he walked in the squares of the pavement avoiding the lines.

Enormous success of the first book of songs naturally led to production of the second book, "Teddy Bear and Other Songs." Author and composer got fun out



WRITER A. A. MILNE.
Had fun concocting music directions for his songs.

of deciding upon suitable directions.

Instead of terms like "Allegro molto," etc., etc., they thoroughly enjoyed themselves concocting phrases like: "Not too fast, or Aunt Susan won't hear all the words"; "Brightly (as befits a man with braces)"; "Timidly, with one eye on nurse"; and so on.

Milne used to go over to Fraser-Simson's house to hear the songs after they were set, and Christopher Robin used to accompany his father. But Christopher Robin wasn't particularly interested in those occasions.

1YA listeners will hear "When We Were Very Young" (Fraser-Simson), sung by Clement Q. Williams, the Australian baritone, on Saturday, January 21.

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