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HATS AND MARBLES

(continued from previous page)

has gone to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature) that he has written a new verse play, which will be seen for the first time in London in 1949. Mr. Shaw's play has no title, as yet, but he has admitted this much: "You can say it is a post-atomic play."

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MONEY is needed to maintain the house where John Keats died in Rome, and the graves of Keats and Shelley in the Protestant Cemetery, and the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association is making a move to raise it. When war came to Italy all the rare books, relics, manuscripts and pictures which had been kept in the house in the Piazza di Spagna were removed for safety to Monte Cassino. When the Germans took the town and the monastery the archivist managed to smuggle them back to Rome, so that they escaped the bombardment which preceded the New Zealanders' unlucky entry into the town. But they cannot be preserved against simple decay without money.

* * *

THE Elgin Marbles—fragments of the frieze of the Parthenon—also escaped destruction in the war. They were removed from their place in the British Museum and stored in an unused Underground railway tunnel beneath the Aldwych, and the work of carrying them back to the museum has just begun.

They were carved 23 centuries ago, and stood at Athens until 1801, when Greece was a province of Turkey. Lord Elgin, British Ambassador to Turkey, obtained permission to remove what sculpture he liked, his reason being that the Parthenon was being used for target practice. He shipped 250ft. of the frieze, which was originally 524ft. long, but the vessel was wrecked, and for three years its cargo lay at the bottom of the sea. It cost Lord Elgin £74,000 to get them to England, and in 1816 he was given £35,000 for them by the Government.

Some parts are forever lost, others are in Paris, and some are still in position in Athens. Before the war, the Elgin fragments were supplemented by plaster casts of the others, but they will not be when the present move is finished.

In 1939 there was a controversy over the marbles being cleaned with a "blunt copper tool" which led to the resignation of two British Museum officials; not very long after, they had to be taken down into the Aldwych tube, and at first an official slept with them every night. Later, men were needed to perform

other tasks, and the figures of gods and goddesses of ancient Greece were alone in the darkness, except for having their temperature and humidity regularly measured. Now they are to come out, a few at a time, on their wooden trolleys, under brown paper covers, and the black dust of sub-London will be removed with a spoutless pair of bellows.

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LORD ELGIN'S manner of saving the Parthenon from target practice was to take it to pieces and remove it. From France, comes news that the Government has decided to protect Chartres cathedral by removing the aerodrome that is near it. When the aerodrome was originally constructed near the



"THE BLACK DUST of sub-London will be removed with a spoutless pair of bellows"

cathedral the municipality, under the influence of local opinion, refused to support its transfer elsewhere on the ground that this would mean a loss of trade for the town. Now the municipality strongly supports the transfer.

During the war no damage was done to the cathedral, from which the windows had been removed, but another old church and the municipal library, containing valuable mediaeval manuscripts, were destroyed because of the placing of the aerodrome. It will cost about £1,000,000 to take the aerodrome away now.

SERVICE V. PRIVILEGE

"La Vasque," by Edmond Blanguernon

I WOULD not be the fountain,
Fancifully vain,
Nimble leaping moonwards
In some proud demesne,
Where pensive resignation
And melancholy reign.

NO. Underneath the branches
Of a wind-loved tree,
Where flows along the roadside
A stream for all to see,
There I'd be the horse-trough
That gives its waters free.

—G. W. von Zedlitz