

# DID YOU HEAR THIS?

## Extracts From Recent Talks

### Tuis and Kowhais

THE third term of my talk, "The Gold," refers to the kowhai's blooms which, during August and September, are a glorious sight where the trees are growing in clumps on the hillsides or singly in private gardens. The flowering of the kowhai is worth travelling a long way to see. The trees are then heavy with their rich amber blossoms, which are ravished for their sweet contents by the tuis. These, throughout the winter, have probably had a fairly thin time. The birds attack the kowhai flowers with a kind of fierce gaiety, with gurglings and chortlings, and sudden anvil-like notes. There is an occasional bell or flute tune, or a burst of baritone bells, as the birds break open the clustering blooms. They seem almost drunk with the delicious and long-awaited banquet, while all the air is full of silvery sounds. There is plenty of evidence that these handsome and historic native birds are now holding their own, if not increasing, everywhere. They have reacted strongly from the first impact of the white man on their natural food-bearing trees, and are now finding suitable food in flowers such as those of the Australian scarlet gums, blue gums, barberry, and wattle.—(*"The Kowhai Trees, the Tuis, and the Gold,"* by E. J. Kehoe, 4YA August 30).



### Making Their Fortunes

WHATEVER the cause, there is little doubt that a firm belief in the possibility of making gold once existed. Henry VI. granted permission to several commissions to experiment on the transmutation of base metals into gold and silver. That was in 1455. The Commission consisted of two mercers, two grocers, two goldsmiths and two drapers. Business men seem to have predominated. Another commission was appointed the next year, consisting of an alderman, a fishmonger, two more grocers, two physicians with Thomas Atclyffe the Queen's physician and Henry Sharp, Master of the College of St. Lawrence. This Commission appears to have been appointed to keep an eye on the previous one. Three years afterward, the Continent was flooded with counterfeit English Rose nobles: and Scotland safeguarded itself, with customary caution, by prohibiting the entry of English money. Alchemical cases also came before the law courts. I like the one in which the Countess of Erbach was involved in 1725. This lady had given protection to a suspected poacher. In gratitude he turned all her silver plate into bars of gold. The gold was examined by a goldsmith, who pronounced it pure gold. The count, her husband, then claimed half of it. But the Court at Leipzig decided that as the plate belonged to the countess before the transmutation it must still remain her property.—(*Professor F. G. Soper, "The Evolution of Chemical Ideas,"* 4YA September 3).

### Horace is Human

HORACE has been described as a short, fat, prematurely-grizzled bachelor, good-tempered and easy-going, placid and indolent on the surface but concealing a good brain underneath. Not a type you might think to make an obvious poet. We are well enough educated, these days, to know that a poet—to be a poet—doesn't have to have long hair and die in a garret, but it is unusual to find a poet who so very definitely seeks the average pleasures of life and takes the ordinary man's point of view. You will not find in Horace any spontaneous passion or sustained imaginative power, such as is associated with poetry of the highest order. But what he has to give is not to be despised—and that is, a perfection of form which never falters, an unflin-

choice of the apt word (he is the most quoted of all Roman writers), "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed," the tempered and polished expression of common experience. More than all this—the quality that really makes him perennial—is the charm of personality which the poems reveal so effortlessly. Horace is human. Although he was the intimate friend of Maecenas, he was not a snob. He had his weaknesses, but he knew what they were, and no one makes fun of them better than himself. He is not vain: he does not take himself seriously. It is this trait that has always made him particularly attractive to English people: his sense of humour is very close to our own. Until recently the site of his famous Sabine farm used to be visited every year by hundreds of English tourists, whose interest, it has been said, once prompted the Italian peasants to ask: "Who is this Horace? Was he an Englishman?"—(*Dr. K. J. Sheen, "Horace and the Augustan Age,"* 4YA September 10).

### "We Must Have Timber"

JONES: I was reading to-day (this is in the year 1890) a gloomy article by a chap who said we were wasting our forests shockingly, and that New Zealand's coat of arms ought to be an axe and a box of matches. He prophesied all sorts of disasters in the future—shortage of timber, kauri up to £5 a hundred—just think of it, why it's only a few shillings now—erosion of the soil and flooding of rivers. Lot of rot it seemed to me.



ROBINSON: I'm not so sure. We have wasted a frightful lot of timber. Nature knows her business all right, and she didn't cover most of this country with forests for nothing.

JONES: Oh, but we've only been a colony fifty years, and look at the bush we've still got. Look at the centre of the North Island—why we don't know how much is there.

ROBINSON: That's where rivers rise, and if we cut the bush down what'll happen to them?

JONES: Oh, I think you're too gloomy. We must have timber. Prosperity can look after itself.—(*"Background of New Zealand: Sawmilling,"* prepared by Martin Nestor and F. Lingard, 2YA September 9).

### Baby's Scribbling

D: You are right when you say that even very young children seem to like drawing. Almost as soon as a child can hold a pencil he begins drawing. His first drawing, possibly about the age of two years, is in the nature of random scribbling. At first these are of the zig-zag pattern. Backwards and forwards goes the pencil and what a delight the little one gets from the rhythmic motion and the realisation that a pattern is being left on the paper. Soon the scribbling takes on a rounded form—that of a series of circles. If you watch carefully you will notice that the baby uses his whole arm in the movement of drawing. It is this freedom of arm movement which gives the scribbling its pleasing rhythmic character.

C: Do these scribbles have any meaning to the very young child? Is the baby really trying to say something by the use of his scribbling?

D: At first, no. But after a few months of this random scribbling the child suddenly sees some resemblance between the shapes or masses of scribbling and the objects around him. The most common object he sees is his mother, and in all probability his developing mind sees a likeness between the scribbled mass and his mother. He then enters the stage when he deliberately tries to reproduce

### Knitting In Parliament

When I first visited Parliament many years ago the House met in what had been the ballroom of the old Government House, and is now the social hall where receptions are held for distinguished visitors. It was very cramped, members sat on raised platforms arranged in a horse-shoe shape round the room, and there was no ladies' gallery worth speaking of. There were a few seats for Ministers' wives, at one end of the press gallery on the Speaker's right, the men's gallery with a few seats for women visitors at one end was on the Speaker's left, and members' wives sat on the floor of the House, behind the members. It was all very friendly, and the members who had to squeeze past the ladies to get to their seats took a great interest in the sewing and knitting that went on so busily. One day a reel of cotton was dropped and rolled down and down till it came to rest in front of the Speaker's chair. But though the owner of the reel was covered with confusion, everyone else, including the messenger who rescued the reel, was most amused. Looking back, it seems that it was, in spite of fierce party strife, a cheerful, rather happy-go-lucky House, in those piping days of peace before 1914.—(*Talk to women by "Margaret."*)

the scribbled mass, that is, he begins his purposeful artistic development. Now he is trying to say something by means of a drawing. He is using the graphic or picture form of art as a means of expression in much the same way as he is developing the use of speech.—(*Bruce Dawber and G. L. Campbell in "Things as Seen by a Teacher,"* 3YA September 11).

### Screen History

THE whole business of selecting, casting, rehearsing, and filming that long series of screen stories that began with "The Green Goddess" and "Disraeli," and has given us, since, "The House of Rothschild," "Old English," "The Iron Duke," "Voltaire," and so on, is so clearly described and illustrated that I suppose this may very well come to be regarded as a classic chapter of screen history, written from a point of view which itself has historic interest. Arliss had the traditional training of the stage and reached his full fame upon it: then, just at the moment when sound-film production began to move from crudity to artistic development, he transferred his experience and his fame to share in its progress and influence it. That can't happen again.—(*J. H. E. Schroder, reviewing "George Arliss,"* by Himself, 3YA September 3).



### New Zealand to India

HOW many listeners know that New Zealand provided India with one of its Governors? Yet a New Zealander actually did achieve that distinction. Sir William Sinclair Marris, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., was at one time a schoolmate of Lord Rutherford. He got his preliminary education at Wanganui and Canterbury College and finished off at Christ Church, Oxford. He went to India in 1896, and at the end of the Boer War was loaned to the Transvaal Government on account of his administrative ability to help evolve order following the change of Government. After returning to India he was successively Home Secretary, Governor of Assam, and later Governor of the United Provinces. A little over twelve years ago he was appointed to the Council of India. Returning to England, he became head of Armstrong College, Newcastle, attached to Durham University. Sir William Marris's hobby is translating the classics, and he has published several volumes of his translations.—(*"New Zealand Brains Abroad,"* by Bernard Magee and Major F. H. Lampen, 2YA).