

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

When Troy Was Besieged

AS every schoolboy would know if he were a Tom Macaulay, the loss of surface-water in the Mediterranean by evaporation is not compensated for by the inflow of rivers. Consequently from both ends of that vast inland lake there is a constant inrush current, through Gibraltar in the west and through the Dardanelles (or Hellespont, as the ancients called it) at the eastern end, where, according to the strength of the prevailing north-east wind, there is a steady flow into the Mediterranean of from three to six knots. This swift current, difficult enough at the Dardanelles for modern steamers, and often made more formidable by strong winds, was so serious a problem for ancient shipping that it was a regular custom to unload cargo under lee of the headland and transport it overland to a port in the Hellespont. The road across this plain was commanded by the town of Troy, and the Trojan chieftains maintained the road and levied toll in those far-off days. Now, the early Greeks (the Achaeans of Homer), yellow haired heroes whose favourite title was "sacker of cities," had accepted the challenge of the high-handed and doubtless none too scrupulous toll-collectors who bestrode the path of Greek progress eastwards. It was an age of sieges, and the most famous seems to have been their siege of Troy. That was over three thousand years ago, about 1180 B.C. ("Homer and the Heroic Age"; Prof. T. D. Adams, 4YA, October 1.)



What is Usefulness?

CRAFTSMAN: If you will move your feet along the mantelpiece a little I'll show you an article which serves no material need.

CITY-MAN: Righto. Well what is it? It looks like a cow.

CRAFTSMAN: That is a water buffalo carved in soapstone. Notice how skilfully it has been designed and carved. No little bits to knock off or chip easily. See how the natural colouring of the stone has been considered. It is a very good piece of work.

CITY-MAN: I'll take your word for that, but what use is that water-buffalo in soapstone to you or anyone else?

CRAFTSMAN: Do you like music?

CITY-MAN: Yes, especially orchestral music. I like some of the stuff which comes over the air.

CRAFTSMAN: And do you go to the pictures?

CITY-MAN: Once a week, sometimes twice.

CRAFTSMAN: And what use are pictures to you?

CITY-MAN: Oh, well one can't work all the time. Have to get some amusement, entertainment occasionally you know. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

CRAFTSMAN: Very true. And that water buffalo gives me a similar pleasure to that of listening to music, or going to a good picture. It is very useful to me. It helps to keep me from becoming dull. (F. A. Shurrock and Gordon McArthur, "Things As Seen by a Craftsman," 3YA, October 2.)

Jobs After Leaving School

UNFORTUNATELY there have grown up in the minds of parents and children many false notions of the prestige attached to certain occupations and a corresponding lack of it in others. It is difficult to understand, for instance, the prejudice against housework, the work for which so many girls are eminently suited, work too which should be so valuable a preparation for home life when later they marry and have homes of their own. To some

parents the word "factory" is anathema, and there have been cases of parents urging and almost forcing girls into office work for which they were quite unsuited just because they felt it had a better standing. Why, I don't know. I wish these parents would learn more about factory work in all its branches rather than judge it by one superficial acquaintance, as so many do. In factories are to be found some of the oldest trades of the world, spinning and weaving for instance, dressmaking and millinery. The same remarks apply to boys who object to starting as messengers, or to doing jobs given to the new junior on the staff. Many people are unaware of the excellent opportunities in such avenues as farming and warehouse work, and so on. (G. W. C. Drake, Vocational Guidance Officer, in a talk with A. B. Thompson, "School and Vocation," 1YA, September 26.)

Earning A Living

Specialising too young destroys all-round development which makes for adaptability. Too many boys and girls concentrate on the subject which they think will earn them a living, and neglect others often far more important. It should be emphasised that schooling is not solely for the purpose of training for a career, or earning a living. It is a mistake to think that, because a boy is good at drawing he will not be happy in a career unless he is doing commercial art—in many cases he can develop his interests in a hobby rather than in a job. It is for much more than that, though parents and children may lose sight of this. It is a preparation for the living of leisure hours as well as working hours—that is, a preparation for the whole of living. All courses in all schools are planned on this principle, and it is a very grave mistake to look on those subjects which do not directly aim at training for vocation as a waste of time. (G. W. C. Drake, Vocational Guidance Officer in a talk with A. B. Thompson, "School and Vocation," 1YA, September 26.)

London's Fogs

SOON, we shall be hearing from England of fogs over the Channel; fogs over the Thames Estuary; fogs over London. Some people imagine that England, particularly London, is shrouded in fog for the greater part of the winter. But that isn't so. There are many grey misty days, with visibility limited; the clouds hang low, the air is chill and damp, the pavements are wet and slimy, and there is a halo around every street lamp. But that isn't a fog; not a real fog. There are fogs AND fogs, and what we call a "London particular," is something about which you can have no doubt at all. But there are spells of clear, crisp, frosty weather, with blue skies and still air.



I'm afraid I had rather the impression that the sun seldom shone in London during the winter. I had probably got the idea in America, where I had spent two years, before going on to England. There, so much stress was always laid on London's grey skies and London fogs, that I was amazed the day I arrived in London

for the first time, though it was the depth of winter, to find the sun shining in a cloudless sky. I was so surprised that I just dumped my luggage in a hotel and dashed out to take a bus somewhere—anywhere. I wanted to see London while the sun shone. I remembered how amused a policeman was when I asked him which bus, and where to go. "Take your time, take your time," he said genially. "The sun will shine again another day; we get lots of sunshine in London—even in winter." (Nella Scanlan, "Shoes and Ships and Sealing-Wax," 2YA, October 1.)

Beauty From the Sea

AN interesting thing I have been told about the paua shell is that most beaches have their own particular type and colour. In some of the bays around Wellington the pinky shade is predominant, while down at Kaikoura, blue and mauve colours are found, and on other beaches the shells are all green-tinted. Although many of the pauas are picked up



off the sands, they are often battered about by the waves, and the best specimens are taken from the rocks. One has to approach the pauas very quietly and scoop them suddenly from the rocks with a sharp tool. If the fish inside the shell are frightened by a noise, they clamp so desperately to the rocks that it is almost impossible to shift them. The Maoris have used the shell extensively for decorating the figures carved on their pas. Next time you see a tiki's eyes glittering at you from a native gateway, remember the opal-tinted paua. (Phyllis Anchor, "Speaking Personally: Beauty from the Sea," 2YA, October 3.)

The Music of Homer's Verse

WHERE else will you find the musical quality of the euphonious Greek language, with its prevalence of vowels and liquid consonants? Take, for contrast, our clumsy stuttering phrase, "from ships and huts"; that is the translation of Homer's "neon apo kai klisiaon." In English, Longfellow gives us the same metre as Homer's, as well as our language can reproduce it, in his "Evangeline":

"This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks . . .

Loud from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced neighbouring ocean

Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest."

And those scholars who gave us the Authorised Version of the Bible occasionally reproduce the Homeric hexameter; for example, "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted"; or (what Dean Inge considers the best hexameter in the Bible): "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Even from these few instances we may gather some impression of

"the rise

And long roll of the hexameter";

For the general effect produced by reading aloud any long passage of the Iliad or the Odyssey has often been likened to that made by the waves of the sea. Listen to this one line in which Homer is saying that Achilles in his grief "went silently along the beach of the loud-roaring sea," and, though you may not know one word of the language, you will sense the gathering swell and the breaking of the wave as it hisses along the beach:

Be d' akeon para thina polyphloisboio thalasses.

Coleridge has spoken the last word on Homer's verse:

"Strongly it bears us along in swelling and limitless billows,

Nothing before and nothing behind but the sky and the ocean."

(Prof. T. D. Adams, "Homer and the Heroic Age," 4YA, October 1.)