

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Shopping in Singapore

SINGAPORE would be an attractive place, if it wasn't for the heat. At least, to my mind. But it is so near the Equator that it has, you might say, only two seasons; it is either hot and wet, or hot and dry. The variation in the length of daylight is quite insignificant. Practically the whole year round, the sun sets about six o'clock, and as in all tropical places, darkness shuts down almost immediately. The further you get from the Equator the longer the twilight. That is why Dunedin has a much longer twilight than Auckland. About fifteen minutes after the sun has gone down in Singapore, it is pitch dark. So, all the year round, you have a long hot dark evening to face. To us, the joy of a warm, summer evening is that we can enjoy it out of doors. In Singapore, there is no daylight left after about a quarter past six. Life in tropical countries is conditioned by the climate. In Singapore, the white residents, the European women, do most of their shopping early in the morning, probably between 8 and 9. Certainly before ten. After that, the heat is far too exhausting to be out of doors. Though you may find a few of them sitting round long, cool drinks in a club or hotel lounge at eleven in the morning, after their morning's shopping. But the majority are home by that time. And they always travel by car or rickshaw; they seldom walk anywhere. There are rows of rickshaws drawn up all along the streets, and you hop into one for even the shortest distance.—(*"Ships and Shoes and Sealing-wax,"* by Nelle Scanlan, 2YA, February 21.)



Buying Real Silk

ONE of the joys of any Eastern city, and particularly Singapore, are the Bombay shops as they are called. These are run by Indian merchants. It is here that you get the loveliest silks, those embroidered silk shawls, and sets of lingerie and, oh, crowds of other lovely things. And this silk is real silk, and some of the embroidery is truly magnificent. You get Chinese silk and embroidery also. It is fascinating, but ruinous to spend time in these Bombay shops, their beautiful things are so difficult to resist. Oriental rugs and carpets, Indian brass, camphor wood chests, Chinese lacquer cabinets, all sorts of treasures are stacked in these Bombay shops. And when one of the big liners or a cruising ship calls at Singapore, these shops are crowded during the early morning hours. They live very largely on this tourist trade. No woman ever visits Singapore without coming away with some of their lovely silks and embroideries.—(*"Ships and Shoes and Sealing-wax,"* Nelle Scanlan, 2YA, February 21.)

tives are chosen every two years, the whole House is dissolved and must be entirely re-elected. But, the Senate is never dissolved in a single body. Every two years one-third only of the Senators are elected. Consequently the Senate is a continuous body, which can defend the same policy over a period of years. The House is more liable to suddenly shifting majorities. Yet another reason gives the Senate its preponderance over the House. The Senate is a small body; it has only 96 members. But the House is a much larger assembly of 435. Naturally a group of under 100 can develop a corporate spirit and a sense of unity much more easily than a group of over 400.—(*"The Political System of the United States: Congress,"* by Professor Lipson, 2YA, February 23.)

Julius Knight, Old-timer

"THE Lady of Lyons" used to be almost as safe a stand-by as 'East Lynne.' I only saw it once and I'm afraid I laughed a good deal when I shouldn't. It really was a bad play. But those were the days."

"Do you think that is because we're getting old, or were they really the days?"

"They were different somehow. The theatre itself was different. When Julius Knight first came to New Zealand in the 'nineties, the cinema wasn't thought of—at any rate in its present form. By the way, I saw his first performance in this country—it was in the 'Sign of the Cross.' A play was a play of flesh and blood and gorgeous scenery, and there was all the romance and glamour of the theatre. Why, you could smell it. The cinema has a far larger following to-day, but it hasn't the same kind of appeal. We had our favourite actors and actresses, hadn't we? We could see them in flesh and blood, and not as shadows."—(*Tribute to Julius Knight, 2YA, February 27.*)



day, but it hasn't the same kind of appeal. We had our favourite actors and actresses, hadn't we? We could see them in flesh and blood, and not as shadows."—(*Tribute to Julius Knight, 2YA, February 27.*)

The Greeks Hated Jazz

I COMMEND this little book to all who want to think beyond the confines of the day-to-day war news and local politics to-day; to those who wish to discover the deep-laid basis for much which we accept in this age that is enduring and good; and to those who would seek, expressed with literary

artistry, opinions on many topical questions that the touch of time has turned to truth. For instance, you can learn what Plato would do with those men who reached the age of thirty-five without marrying—he was the inventor of the bachelor tax. You may be interested to compare the problems of the Athenian school-teacher with those of contemporary New Zealand educationists. You are quite probably one of those radio listeners who believe ecstatically in, or disapprove strongly of, swing music. Plato noted just such a craze for hot rhythm (or its Greek equivalent) developing in Athens. As time went on (he says) the poets "... introduced the reign of vulgar and lawless innovation. They were men of genius, but they had no perception of what is legitimate in music, raging like Bacchanals and possessed with inordinate delights—mingling lamentations with hymns and paeans with dithyrambs imitating the sounds of the flute on the lyre, and making the general confusion;" (you recognise the symptoms?)—"ignorantly affirming that music has no truth, and, whether good or bad, can only be judged of rightly by the pleasure which it gives to the hearer." And he observes: "If the democracy which judged had only consisted of educated persons no fatal harm would have been done..." Without entering the realm of musical controversy, one has to recognise that here, as elsewhere and everywhere in this fascinating book, this ancient Greek had a word that is relevant to our day-to-day preoccupations.—(*Book Talk by John Moffett, 4YA, February 19.*)

Tuis and Bell Birds

THE tui is often called the Parson Bird because of its little tuft of white feather that sticks out from its throat, but in spite of his dark, clerical garb it is not at all sedate or staid. It has a very gay manner of flight. It can sing beautifully, but it prefers to use its voice to mock other birds and can produce a strange variety of notes. In captivity it mocks fowls, and cats and even babies. Tui pie was popular with colonists. In spite of this tuis are quite common and will, with any encouragement, come into gardens which are close to the bush. I have seen them sipping honey out of egg cups which have been attached to the trees in a garden at Rona Bay, Wellington. The bell bird is another bird which is loved in New Zealand. Its voice is a thing of the greatest beauty. Tuis and bell birds are great friends; they



can often be seen singing in the flax flowers sipping the honey. The bell bird is another bird which does not really fear man. It eats berries as well as insects and honey. It became much rarer owing to bush fires and cats and rats, but is now coming back in many districts. It is quite common for instance, in the bush around the Wellington bays.—(*"Our Natural Heritage and What We Are Doing With It,"* by "Belinda," 2YA, February 10.)

Pearl Buck and the Real China

ALMOST all Pearl Buck's work has a Chinese background; more than that, it is Chinese through and through. Some of Anne Bridge's novels have a Chinese background—"Pekin Picnic" and "The Ginger Griffin," for example. But while Anne Bridge portrays the life of English people in China, scarcely touching Chinese civilisation itself, Pearl Buck writes of the real Chinese—the peasants toiling unremittingly and uncomplainingly, the landowners, the merchants, the scholars, and above all, the women. You will remember probably seeing the film of her greatest novel "Good Earth," in which Paul Muni and Luise Rainer played with outstanding success the parts of the struggling peasant and his silent, dogged slave-wife. Pearl Buck has had ample opportunity of learning to know the Chinese. Though she was born in Virginia, she spent her childhood in China, where her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sydenstricker, were missionaries. Apparently the little girl had few white children to play with, and thus she was thrown into the company of Chinese and came to know well their way of life and habits of thought. When she was little she loved to listen to the tales of her Chinese nurse.—(*"A Few Minutes with Women Novelists—Pearl Buck,"* by Margaret Johnston, 2YA, February 22.)

Felt but not Expressed

FIRST of all is a short poem by Walter de la Mare, called "Silver." This is a very interesting example of a simple subject that is familiar to all. It is part of the poet's business to do this. He tries to express not only what has never been thought before, but what has been thought and has not been put into words—at any rate, words as good as his. He transfigures all sorts of common experiences—love and death, sunsets, sunrises, the song of birds, the beauty of flowers, the trees, feelings of joy and sorrow. All of us are affected like this by poetry at times. We say to ourselves: "Yes, I felt just like that, but I couldn't express it"; "Yes, I've seen that sort of thing, but not half so clearly as he sees it." Well, in this poem "Silver," Walter de la Mare writes about one of the commonest of experiences—a moonlight night. We have all gone out of the house on a moonlight night and looked at the lights and shadows about the place, and said "How lovely!"—but that's about as far as most of us get in our comments. We are spell-bound, but tongue-tied.—(*"The Poetry Hour,"* 2YA, February 14.)

Why the Senate is Powerful

IT is a rather remarkable fact that of these two chambers, the Senate is the more powerful and the more important. I say it is "rather remarkable" because normally in democratic countries you find it is the other way round. We know that in Britain the House of Commons is more powerful than the House of Lords; and in New Zealand our House of Representatives is certainly far stronger than the Legislative Council. Why is it, then, that in the United States, the Senate has come to count for more than the Lower House? One reason is that a Senator is elected for six years, that is even two years longer than the President himself. But a Representative has only two years in office, and must then face another election. The six-year term of the Senator gives him greater security and greater independence. Moreover, when Representa-