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HOW TO DO IT
Half tumbler warm water. 'Steradent' — the cap of the tin full. STIR. Steep dentures overnight or 20 minutes. Rinse well under the tap.

St. 37

Steradent

cleans and sterilizes false teeth

EDUCATION UNDER FIRE

Wellington School Teacher's Experiences In War-Time England

A WELLINGTON school-teacher who happened to be teaching in a London school at the outbreak of war (on an exchange basis with a London teacher who came to Wellington), had the experience of helping with the evacuation of London school children to the country. He is W. J. Mountjoy, junior, who has now returned to his previous position at the Te Aro School, Wellington, and he had some interesting comments to make to a *Listener* representative, on the effect of the evacuation on the schools system.

His school, in the Battersea district, a poorer part of London, was warned some days beforehand to be ready for evacuation. After two or three false alarms all the children were gathered at the school at 6 o'clock one morning, with overcoats if they had them and with enough food for one day. Each child was neatly labelled, and after saying good-bye to their mothers at the school

gates they were taken first in trains and then in buses to a country district about 30 miles away.

At the Village School

This little village received a mixed lot of children representing 20 London schools, together with a headmaster and several teachers, and immediately there was improvised a workable schedule. The village children used the local school in the morning, and the strangers used it in the afternoon. In the spare part of the day, both groups of children went for rambles and played games, and the village hall was organised as a centre for singing, plays, clubs, darts, ping-pong, as well as a starting point for tours to places of historic interest.

Mr. Mountjoy was there for nearly six months, and in that time noticed a remarkable improvement in the standards of the children. What they lost in formal learning they made up in freer and more cultural education. Just to be in the country for the first time in their lives was of immense interest. The cottages and homes they lived in were in many cases far superior to their own tenements in London. Little wonder therefore that the children grew physically and mentally, and that relatively very few of them went back to London.

Some Confusion

Not all evacuation schemes worked so well. In some cases the children went from comfortable homes to overcrowded houses, and in some cases not to the country but to other cities. Mrs. W. J. Mountjoy, who was also trained as a teacher in New Zealand, and who accompanied her husband to England, was relieving as a temporary teacher at a central school (post-primary and rather like our Technical Schools) in Walthamstow, North London, when war broke out, and her school was hurriedly evacuated by train to an industrial town in Bedfordshire. On arrival they found no arrangements for billeting, so that the teachers had to seek out any households prepared to take children. This occupied the whole day. In the evening, the teachers found their luggage at one school and the Billeting Officer at another, where they were met with "I hope you found somewhere for yourselves also." Until air raid shelters were built, schools were not opened in this town, and teachers took their charges for a walk every morning and afternoon, and there was no schooling for some weeks. From circumstances like this, many children gradually drifted back to their homes in London, and refused to return, and their education was not improved by the experience.

Examination System Upset

Throughout England, and due of course more to air bombing than to evacuation schemes, the whole examination system has been upset, says Mr. Mountjoy. Children cannot be prepared for the examinations of their age group, scholarships are lost, and the syllabus and curriculum are disorganised, and in some cases has completely broken down.



S. P. Andrew photograph
W. J. MOUNTJOY, Junr.
Some better for it, some worse

In London itself, there were no schools open for the first six months, and the children left in the city just ran wild. The children were recalled first for a system of home tuition by the teachers, who visited the homes in their areas, and set homework for any children they found. Gradually, as air raid shelter accommodation was provided, the schools were re-opened, at first for half a day only, and full compulsory education was re-instituted only recently.

From the beginning of the blitz, teachers were asked to volunteer for service in rest and communal feeding centres, and indeed, home science teachers were immediately seconded for duty as cooks and dietitians. Teachers working in the rest centres served 24 hours on and 24 hours off,

Verse-Speaking

Before he left New Zealand two years ago, Mr. Mountjoy was well known for his poetry talks in the 2YA educational session, and as the founder of the Wellington Verse-Speaking Choir. In England he and his wife became extremely friendly with Marjorie Gullan, who started the modern verse-speaking movement.

Even in wartime there is a big public in England for poetry reading. Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft and Alec Guinness (the man who put on Hamlet in modern dress) gave a very popular series of readings of poetry in the Globe Theatre after the war started. Lunch time readings of poetry in such halls as the Westminster Central Hall were promoted to raise money for refugees. The "Poetry Reading in Pubs" group of the Tavistock Theatre was still carrying on, but the English Verse-Speaking Festivals at Oxford had to be cancelled because Oxford is too busy and too packed with government servants. Instead, a small festival was held in London for the enthusiasts, at which L. A. G. Strong, who reads verse for the BBC, made the criticisms. Mr. and Mrs. Mountjoy became friendly with John Massfield, Poet Laureate, who frequently expressed deep interest in the verse-speaking movement in New Zealand.

Strain and fatigue..



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