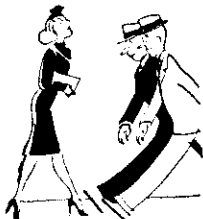


DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

"A Neat Pair of Ankles"

ALL eyes, sooner or later, are focused on the advancing or retreating feet of women. They notice everything from the tip of the toe to the back of the heel, and the seam running up the back of the stocking. Men, indeed, seem to start their appraisal of a woman's appearance and impression of her by a study of her feet. At least that's the impression their remarks would lead one to believe. When walking in the street they are always the first to detect the liquid-stockinged legs, and to comment on them. Where we women often say of a passer-by—"Did you ever see a sweeter expression?" or "What a dreadful hat!" they remark on "a neat pair of ankles," or "a good hold on New Zealand."—(A.C.E. Talk on "Care of Footwear," 4YA, May 2.)



Aztec City

PLANT cultivation in some form or other was known in the Americas (in pre-European times) from the present Canadian border as far south as Central Chile. The almost complete dependence on cultivated plants, however, was restricted to mountain areas from Mexico to Bolivia and a wide variety of some of the most useful domestic plants known anywhere in the world contributed to the highly organised and in part highly urbanised economies characteristic of the great empires of the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru. Without apparently exhausting the soil resources on which their economy depended, they yet achieved a complexity of culture and an efficiency of production which meant the existence of opportunity for the development of a richer material and immaterial culture than ever known to the comparatively more primitive Maoris or still simpler gatherers.

B: You mentioned the word "urbanised." Do you mean urbanised in the European sense?

A: Indeed I do. The Incas had large cities with amenities equalling or surpassing many European cities of the 15th century. We have good estimates of their population but the capital of the Aztec empire in Mexico in a similar situation was a metropolis of some 300,000 souls.

B: Why that's larger than Wellington!

A: It is indeed. Despite the fact that they had no mortar, their skill at cutting and fitting stones enabled them to build most substantial roads and buildings. Among the buildings were large granaries where surpluses from those parts of the empire which had more abundant harvests in any years could be distributed to other areas not so fortunate. —(Winter Course Talk: "Science and Society—The Primitive and Economic World." Discussion between K. B. Cumberland, M.A., and A. H. Clark, M.A., 3YA, April 30.)

The Slater Case

THE full story of the famous murder trial in Glasgow in 1908 when an elderly lady, Miss Gilchrist, was found murdered, was told by "Barrister" in his series "Famous Cases" from 4YA on April 28. After summarising the evidence, the course of the trial, and the much debated reprieve from execution to life imprisonment, the speaker went on: "Eighteen and a half years were to pass before Slater was again a free man. During almost the whole of that time

there were constant public agitations for a re-opening of the case. In 1913 an inquiry was held in Glasgow regarding some further evidence which had been produced for the defence, but apart from reviving public interest in the case, it didn't alter the verdict or the sentence. Still the public protests continued. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, was the main advocate in this, but all appeals fell on the deaf ear of officialdom. In 1928 Slater was released and at once appealed to the newly-formed Court of Criminal Appeal in Scotland. Very little further evidence for the defence was produced on the appeal, but Slater's counsel addressed the Court for 14 hours. He certainly had much to talk about. He stressed the fact that Slater was first connected with the crime through the police following a false clue, also the unsatisfactory nature of the identification evidence, and the fact that the hammer produced wasn't an adequate weapon to have caused the injuries. During the hearing of the appeal, Conan Doyle expressed the hope that if the appeal succeeded, it would be on the facts and not merely through some rule of procedure, because in the latter event the question of guilt or otherwise of Slater would for ever remain undetermined. The result was just what he feared. The Appeal Court seized on the fact that the Judge at the trial had made comments regarding the lesser degree of proof necessary for a conviction in the case of a man of bad character. The Appeal Court held that this was a mis-direction to the jury, which may have improperly influenced them in their verdict and they allowed the appeal on that ground. This decision had the effect of acquitting Slater of the charge, but he didn't attempt in any way to establish either his guilt or his innocence, and the case must forever remain in that unsatisfactory state."

Murder at the Theatre

NGAIO MARSH has achieved recognition and popularity, not only in England and the United States and indeed all English-speaking countries, but she has been translated into Dutch, Swedish, Italian and Polish. So if you learn to like her books you will be only one of a great company of her admirers throughout the world. In her chief character, Roderick Alleyn, Ngaio Marsh departs from the tradition of the amateur detective. Chief Detective Inspector Alleyn, of New Scotland Yard, is very much a professional. Yet he is by no means the stereotyped detective of fiction. He is a real person, and a very likeable one. His "Dr. Watson" appears in several books as



Nigel Bathgate, a young journalist with plenty of courage, but without the obnoxious "push" that his calling sometimes induces. . . . You will find that several of Ngaio Marsh's plots have their setting in the theatre. A good setting, too; for the dark shadows and bulky scenery, the passage-ways and ladders and ropes of that strange land behind the scenes lend themselves to the murderer's purpose; but on the other hand the place is well peopled with members of the cast, stagehands and so on; so that there is opportunity here for a cleverly-contrived plot. Ngaio Marsh's descriptions of the theatrical life are authentic, for she toured with the Allan Wilkie company whose presentations of Shakespeare will be recalled by many of you.

You will find that one book *Vintage Murder* is dedicated to "Allan Wilkie and Frediswyde Hunter Watts in memory of a tour in New Zealand." A very fitting book to dedicate to them, too, for the story concerns a murder that took place while an English company was touring in New Zealand.—("A Few minutes with Women Novelists: Some More Writers of Detective Fiction," by Margaret Johnston, 2YA, April 5.)

For Whom the Bell Tolls

[I SUPPOSE most people know that Ernest Hemingway is regarded as one of the best novelists writing to-day. To tell the truth I had grown a little tired and suspicious of him until I read the other day his latest novel *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, but from the beginning to the end of this book I was under the spell of his style and now I am satisfied that there are few living novelists who could write such a moving and significant tale as this is. The story of *For Whom The Bell Tolls* is a story of Spain during the recent war. It is the story of an American who is ordered to blow up a bridge in order to prevent reinforcements from being sent by the enemy at a time when the Government troops are preparing to launch an offensive. In order to carry out his task, which means almost certain death, the American, Robert Jordan, passes through the enemy lines and joins a guerilla band operating in the mountains. The story is the story of his few days of life with the members of the guerilla band before he succeeds in blowing up the bridge. But to indicate the theme is to do little in indicating the importance of the novel. In none of Hemingway's books, not even in the most popular *Farewell to Arms*, is there such a sureness of touch in characterisation, such moving and intimate scenes of a man and a woman in love, such sympathetic understanding of a wide variety of human beings. I can think of no novel which deals so well with all the different aspects of a cruel civil war. Much that Hemingway has to say through his characters of the details and personalities of the Spanish conflict will no doubt be furiously challenged, but this cannot, in my opinion, prevent his book from being regarded as the greatest literary work which has arisen from the suffering and humiliation of the Spanish people. My recommendation is that whatever books you may be forced to neglect, make a determined effort to read this latest work of the well-known American novelist.—(Book Review, by Winston Rhodes, 3YA, April 29.)

City Preludes

[IN an earlier session we included the "Journey of the Magi," by T. S. Eliot, a very unconventional account of the journey of the Wise Men of the East to Bethlehem at the birth of Christ. Here is something by the same poet much more unconventional, a series of city scenes, presumably in London. They are called "Preludes." These "preludes" illustrate the tendency of the modern poet to take everything for his province, even steak being cooked, and



sawdust smelling of beer, and newspapers blown about in the streets. Nearly everything observed in these scenes is sordid, and little or no attempt is made to invest it with beauty. It is like an untidy room, with the remains of the breakfast still there—congealed bacon and eggs on the plates. The poet seems to represent the disillusionment of the nineteen-twenties. Criticising that generation of disillusionment, someone said that they threw up the sponge; but since Eliot wrote these poems these dingy streets have been thrown into the most fiery ordeal, and we all know how the people have conducted themselves.—(Poetry Hour, 2YA, May 2.)