

DID YOU HEAR THIS?

Extracts From Recent Talks

Why He Left Home

ONE day I received a visit from a Dutch artist who had come to Christchurch to collect pictures for an exhibition in Holland. During our conversation he asked me if I had ever met Van der Velden in New Zealand. He also asked me if I had ever heard why Van left Holland.

I answered no, and he told me the following story:

When Van was a young painter the King of Holland used to give a prize and scholarship for the best painting of the year. One year Van sent in a large picture. The two judges were Mesday and Israels. Israels the elder, was a fine painter, and Mesday a rich collector of art treasures, and an amateur painter. The prize was given to Israels's son, now known as Israels the younger, and naturally the scholarship also. This, it appears, so infuriated Van that he went to Israels and told him just what he thought of judges who gave prizes to their sons. But what was worse he rated Mesday so soundly that this latter went to all the art dealers and told them that if they bought or sold any more of Van der Velden's pictures, he, Mesday, wouldn't enter their galleries again. This meant a complete boycott of Van's work in Holland and starvation for the whole family. So Van took the only course open to him, he left Holland, and as he had some friends here, he came to New Zealand. —(*"People, Pictures and Painters,"* Sydney Thompson, 3YA, September 4.)



A Bore From Poland

ONE can't talk of any club without mentioning the "Club Bore." Even the Student Movement House had its Bore. He was a Pole whose name was Freddie, but we all called him Micky Mouse, because though fully grown up, he had an absurd little face like a child and spectacles that seemed to have the unusual roundness of Mickey's eyes. He would "tag on" after everyone in turn and although he was such a bore you couldn't help liking him. Sometimes we would feel specially sorry for Freddie and ask him home to coffee. He would be delighted and would trot along breathlessly at our heels talking more endlessly and boringly than ever. Freddie came from Lvov, and whenever anybody admired anything Freddie would always say, "Ah! but in Lvov we had. . . ." Somehow everything (even the moon and the tramcars) was just a little better in Lvov. Once and only once was Freddie known to say anything funny. It was just after the war had broken out and I expect Freddie, poor lamb, was feeling very heartsick about the fate of his beloved Lvov. An Englishman said airily, "Yes, but you can't call Poland a democracy!" Freddie spluttered incoherently and at last managed to bring out: "Poland was a lovely democracy—in Poland we had elections like you do in England, and you could vote for anybody you liked—even a communist if you liked! I don't know whether Parliament ever sat, but we elected them, and we had a secret ballot and—and everything!" The words tumbled out, tripping over each other, and it wasn't till we were all laughing heartily that Freddie realised he'd said something funny. Then he laughed too. I think he was just as pleased to have at last made people laugh as he would have been had he convinced us that Lvov was such a wonderful place that we all must go there that minute! —(*"Students of the World—Unite!"* Clare Prior, 2YA, September 22.)

Girls in Journalism

THERE is just one more point to be considered here. The discussion so far has been without any distinction as to sex, and there are plenty of girls who feel they would like to go in for journalism. It would be quite wrong to say they should go ahead, that the whole field is open before them, because it isn't. It is true there are women employed in journalism both in this country and elsewhere, and many of them are doing very valuable work. Nevertheless, generally speaking, and more particularly in New Zealand, they are likely to be found doing specialised work of a limited kind, social reporting, looking after the women's and children's sections, and so forth. It's no use considering the case of Dorothy Thompson and other famous women journalists of other countries and thinking that the way to such a career lies clear. The truth is that such openings are few in any country, and in New Zealand practically non-existent. If you were to go through the newspaper offices of this country searching for the number of women employed on the ordinary reporting, sub-editorial, and editorial staffs, the number would take very little counting. It isn't a question whether this should be so, it is just a fact that it is, and at the present time the situation shows no special sign of changing. The result is that the opportunity for girls in journalism is very much smaller than for boys, and that must be realised if disappointment is to be avoided. —(*"Literature and Journalism,"* R. A. Melville, 1YA, September 4.)

A Reporter's Life

THERE is or was a common idea that the journalist lives a Bohemian sort of life, free altogether from many of the conditions that limit the existence of the sober business or professional man. That never was wholly true and it is less so now than ever. There's a good deal more hard work than Bohemian gaiety about the journalist's life. It is true he doesn't live exactly as other people do, especially if he is employed on a morning paper. There can be no appearing at the office at nine and leaving it at five, keeping regular hours or observing all holidays. Anybody who feels he cannot exist except on those terms had better put the idea of journalism out of his mind at once. It doesn't mean that there is no leisure time and no holidays for the journalist, but he very often has to be at work while other people are at play, and have his leisure time while his friends are working. A position with a morning paper means a great deal of night work and much Sunday work as well. These things are taken very much as a matter of course by those who have never experienced them, but they make a good deal of difference to one's life, and especially to the social side of it. It is very easy to lose contact with one's friends in such circumstances. The newspaper deals with events as they happen, which means that the newspaper worker is at the mercy of events. He may be called on at any hour of the day or night, may be required to work for long stretches at a time without relief, and may find that any plans of his own get short shrift in the



face of an office emergency. By way of contrast there are plenty of routine jobs that for considerable periods can make life about as exciting as breaking stones. —(*"Literature and Journalism,"* R. A. Melville, 1YA, September 4.)

Friendship Beyond Frontiers

IT was delightful to walk into the Student Movement House in London at afternoon tea time, a favourite time for gathering together, and see Arab and Jew sitting down together drinking a penny cup of tea and eating a penny sandwich and talking about anything from the Palestinian problem



to ping-pong. In the same way, you would see Moslem and Hindu, Indian and Englishman, Pole and Russian, Italian and African, talking together—and often being the firmest of friends. I have one very touching memory of this kind of friendship surmounting national barriers. A little Chinese man came to the club and everyone loved him. He was cultured, gentle and charming. He lived upstairs in the top regions somewhere and delighted his neighbour's heart by reading English poetry aloud to himself in bed. One day he came into the club and I met him at the foot of the stairs. In his hands was a large flower-pot with one beautiful cyclamen in bloom growing in it. Chao-Tsui was smiling all over his face and quite unable to contain himself.

"My friend gave this to me," he said.

"How nice," I said. But Chao-Tsui, feeling that I obviously didn't understand how terrific it all was, said simply "My friend is Japanese." And he went on upstairs carrying his precious gift in both hands—even his back looked happy. —(*"Students of the World—Unite!"* by Clare Prior, 2YA, September 22.)

Worth Its Salt?

THE aim of this book (*"The Industrial Future of New Zealand,"* by Edmund F. Hubbard), says the author, "is to demonstrate that within the scope of its natural resources, New Zealand may attain—even with a greater population and without a lowering of the standard of living—a high degree of economic self-sufficiency." He then proceeds to survey our resources under various chapter headings as Pastoral, Industry, Agriculture, Forestry, Ceramics, Mineral Resources. To call them chapters is perhaps misleading. Some of them contain only a few paragraphs. All are extremely superficial, consisting of little more than a few broad facts culled from the Official Year Book followed by rather vague generalisations. One chapter, for instance, is called Marine Resources. It consists of three paragraphs which make no attempt to estimate the resources but merely throw out several suggestions, such as that iodine and isinglass and fish glue could be manufactured here. Speaking of salt, he says "The manufacture of salt should become one of the most important industries in the country." He mentions no difficulties and leaves the reader imagining that it would be a simple matter for us to manufacture all the salt we need from sea-water. If this is so, Mr. Hubbard must have made a great discovery, particularly valuable to this country. For salt is not only necessary as part of our diet, it is fundamental to most chemical industries, and these in their turn are fundamental to modern industry, as Mr. Hubbard is the first to acknowledge. And New Zealand has hitherto had to depend on other countries for its salt supplies. We have no known salt deposits, and manufacture from sea-water, though possible, has never been considered practicable in the quantities necessary. If new discoveries have been made to alter this, Mr. Hubbard should say so. As it is, his statement appears to be merely one more of the vague and unsubstantiated assertions which appear on every page of the book. —(*Book Review, J. Harris, 4YA, September 3.*)